LOURDES

A HISTORY OF ITS APPARITIONS AND CURES

GEORGES BERTRIN

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F. THOMAS BERGH, O.S.B.,

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THE STATUE AT THE GROTTO

LOURDES

A HISTORY OF ITS APPARITIONS AND CURES

BY

GEORGES BERTRIN

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WITH A PREFACE BY THE

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PREFACE

Few men, witness the history of Philosophy, have the mental power to find Truth by themselves. Fewer still have time and opportunity to do so, and yet men crave for Truth as for the very food of their souls. In the days of our Saviour men looked and craved for signs, for visible and tangible proofs of His Divinity, and He gave them what they asked for. He gave them His miracles as an irrefragable proof of His Divine Nature and Mission. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not, but if I do, though you will not believe me, believe the works." Throughout the ages He has set the seal of Divine approval on the teaching of the Catholic Church by miracles; and now, in these days, He offers among others the continual miracles at Lourdes. Two thousand years ago, nearly, men of goodwill saw, rejoiced, and believed. Others doubted, disbelieved, and denied, not the facts—no one could deny them—but their Divine origin. Not to God, but to the Devil, these men attributed the miracles they witnessed. In our own times, when Materialism denies the very existence of a Creator and of all supernatural agencies and powers, the miracles at Lourdes are either set aside as *a priori* impossible, or, if the facts are admitted, they are ascribed to suggestion or to the unknown forces of Nature. A moment's thought will show that both methods of attack are equally unscientific and futile.

To deny the very possibility, and consequently the existence, of miracles is of course the easiest and

the shortest way to dispose of those at Lourdes, and consequently of their testimony to the truth of the Catholic Faith. "The principle of criticism," says Renan, "is that a miracle has no place in the scheme of human affairs." Having taken for granted that these interventions of God are impossible, the adversaries of the Church palm off their assertion as though it were a self-evident truism needing no proof whatever. A very convenient method of arguing, most assuredly, but one that is utterly unscientific, and to any thinking man, who lives not by faith but by investigation, devoid of all convincing power, for it lacks the very foundation of Science, namely, Experience. For what is Science? "Science is firstly experience," says Haeckel, "secondly inference." "Our Science is based entirely on experiment," Professor Tait tells us, "or mathematical deduction from experiment." "The man of Science" (the words are Huxley's) "has learned to believe in justification, not by faith but by observation." We may define Science, then, as the body of facts learnt by observation, and the mathematical deductions from them.

It is self-evident, therefore, that to deny *a priori* that a fact can or can not be is not Scientific. Hence it was admittedly most unscientific on the part of the men of Science of the eighteenth century to deny on *a priori* grounds that stones could fall from the blue. Yet they did it, and most persistently, till they were forced to investigate, and admit the fact that bodies do fall from the skies, and aërolites took their place among the data of Science. Then came the next stage, to try to explain that which was proved to exist.

What the observers of falling-stars demanded, we

demand too. Like them, too, we fail to obtain what we ask for. We ask that the miracles at Lourdes should not be denied without examination, but should be submitted to a careful and searching examination; but Science, as represented by a very considerable number of learned men, declines to investigate at all. This refusal, this easy method of setting aside evidence, is so utterly unscientific as to deserve the strongest reprobation even of men who pretend to nothing beyond that amount of common sense that is supposed to be the very basis of all Science. Such men, be they believers or unbelievers, demand that the same scientific methods of investigation be applied to the miracles at Lourdes as are used in the verification of any other phenomenon, and they also insist in the sacred name of Truth that if the alleged cures prove to be facts, they should be candidly recognised as such.

Other men of Science admit the cures, but ascribe them to natural causes, chiefly to suggestion and the "unknown forces of Nature." With regard to suggestion, it is surprising to find how very scanty is the knowledge of many who roundly declare that to it are due the miracles at Lourdes. It would be quite useless to say more on this subject, as it is particularly well treated by our Author. More specious, because dealing with the vague unknown, is the explanation given by those who invoke the "unknown forces of Nature." At first sight it may appear exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to disprove the existence or action of something that no one knows anything about. Be this as it may, it is none the less unscientific to talk about explaining a known fact by an utterly unknown cause. There is no explanation here at all. It is worse than merely

unscientific, it goes in reality against what Science teaches us. If there is one great truth that the patient observations of learned men has made abundantly clear, it is that Nature always acts with perfect uniformity; that she never contradicts herself.

"The one act of faith," says Professor Huxley, "in the convert to Science, is in the universality of order and in the absolute validity in all times and under all circumstances of the law of causation." In other words, Nature always follows the same course in the same circumstances. To attribute the miracles at Lourdes to Nature is to deny this law of uniformity. Even at the risk of tiring the reader, we must give an instance of what we mean. A very constant feature of the cures at Lourdes is their instantaneous character. To take the case of Pierre de Rudder. Irrefutable evidence proves that at a certain moment he was suffering from a terrible wound in his left leg, just below the knee. A number of years previous to his cure both tibia and fibula had been fractured, and, instead of reuniting, the broken ends had suppurated. The surgeons removed nearly an inch of the terminal surfaces in the hope of obtaining a union of the fresh faces. Instead, these too decayed. It follows that both bones were considerably shorter than those of the right leg. The next fact we draw attention to is that, before a shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes, the bones were instantaneously reunited, and that firmly and without trace even of a callus. The wound was healed, and De Rudder walked. His gait during life, and more especially the post-mortem examination, proved that the bones of both limbs were absolutely equal in length. There had been, then, the instan-

taneous formation of about one inch of strong, healthy bone, not to speak of the surrounding tissues. These are assertions that have been investigated, and found to be absolute facts. Are these facts against the known laws of Nature? Without any doubt whatever! It is a law of Nature, so Science teaches us, that she follows an orderly course (call it evolution) in the formation of all living tissues, and this course takes time, as all successive biological changes must, and a very considerable time in the case of a broken tibia, let alone two broken and carious bones. Let the reader consider! The repair of a fracture is the result of a biological process similar to that of the first formation of the bone. From each broken surface thousands upon thousands of cells, hardly one thousandth of a millimetre in size, grow by segmentation, following a clearly defined and well-known course of successive stages. Each cell, when sufficiently developed, divides into two, and so on millions of times over. When this work of multiplication of cells is over, the new embryonic tissue undergoes little by little a process of differentiation, and, according to its situation, becomes periosteum, cartilage, and bone. Meanwhile most minute blood-vessels have been formed, and interpenetrate the new tissues to carry nutriment to them; nerve terminations appear to connect them with the great nerve centres. All this succession of biological activities must, by the very nature of successions, take time. Any one can see this; but to make it clearer still to the reader, let him consider the following further facts of Physiology. The new cells, vessels, and nerves are formed and nourished by materials carried to the seat of the fracture by the blood in circulation.

These materials exist only in minute quantities in the blood. A given quantity of blood contains about $\frac{1}{80}$th part of what the same amount of new callus requires. Moreover, the rate of circulation in the minute vessels is approximately known, and its slowness necessitates a considerable length of time before it has carried the required amount of salts and other materials, and these, by the tardy process of exosmosis, have passed, in part only, through the walls of the vessels. The above is a brief sketch of the process of repair of a fractured bone. To say that some unknown force of Nature did in an instant what Nature always takes a long time to bring about, is to contradict not only all that experience and investigation have shown to be absolutely necessary, but to contradict Reason as well as Science. No, De Rudder was not cured by the "unknown forces of Nature." If not in Nature, then we must seek the cause of his cure in a Power above, beyond Nature. This power is God.

The case of De Rudder is far from being the only one we could cite in this connection. Others can be found in the following pages. Their reality is beyond cavil, and Science cannot explain them. Indeed, all that Science can say is that they are beyond the forces, known and unknown, of Nature. If only the honest searcher after Truth will carefully read this History of Lourdes, he will find in it visible and tangible proofs, given by God Himself, of the Divine nature and origin of that Faith whose Founder is Christ, the Son of Mary Immaculate.

STANISLAUS ST. JOHN, S.J.

114 Mount St., *March* 8, 1908.

In obedience to the Decree of Pope Urban VIII. I declare that I have no intention of attributing any other than a purely human authority to the miracles, revelations, favours, and particular cases recorded in this book; and the same as regards the titles of Saints and Blessed applied to servants of God not yet canonised; except in those cases which have been confirmed by the Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman See, of which I declare myself to be an obedient son; and therefore I submit myself and all which I have written to her judgment.

G. BERTRIN.

Translator's Note.—It has not been found possible to translate the whole of the notes appended to the original of this work, but, when necessary, notes referring to the French edition have been placed at the foot of the page.

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PART I

THE APPARITIONS

LOURDES

CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF THE APPARITIONS

On February the 11th, 1858, took place the first of these famous apparitions which were to astonish the world.

On that winter's day three little girls of Lourdes, Bernadette Soubirous, her sister Mary, and Jeanne Abadie had gone to gather dry twigs alongside the river Gave in the vicinity of the town. It was very cold, and there was no more wood in the poverty-stricken cottage of the Soubirous. Bernadette was fourteen years old, but she looked scarcely more than eleven or twelve.

Having wandered as far as the Massabieille rocks in front of a Grotto in the mountain side, the three children found themselves entrapped between the Gave and a canal which fed a mill near by, and lost itself in the torrent just by the Grotto.

Marie and Jeanne were barefooted in their sabots. Jeanne threw her sabots on to the farther bank; Marie carried hers in her hand, and, holding up their frocks, they crossed the bed of the canal, which was fairly dry at this time. Thus they were able to leave the island. But Bernadette was wearing stockings, for she suffered from asthma and her

mother feared the cold for her. Wishing to avoid coming into contact with the bitterly cold water of the stream, she begged Jeanne, who was the stronger, to carry her pick-a-back to the other bank.

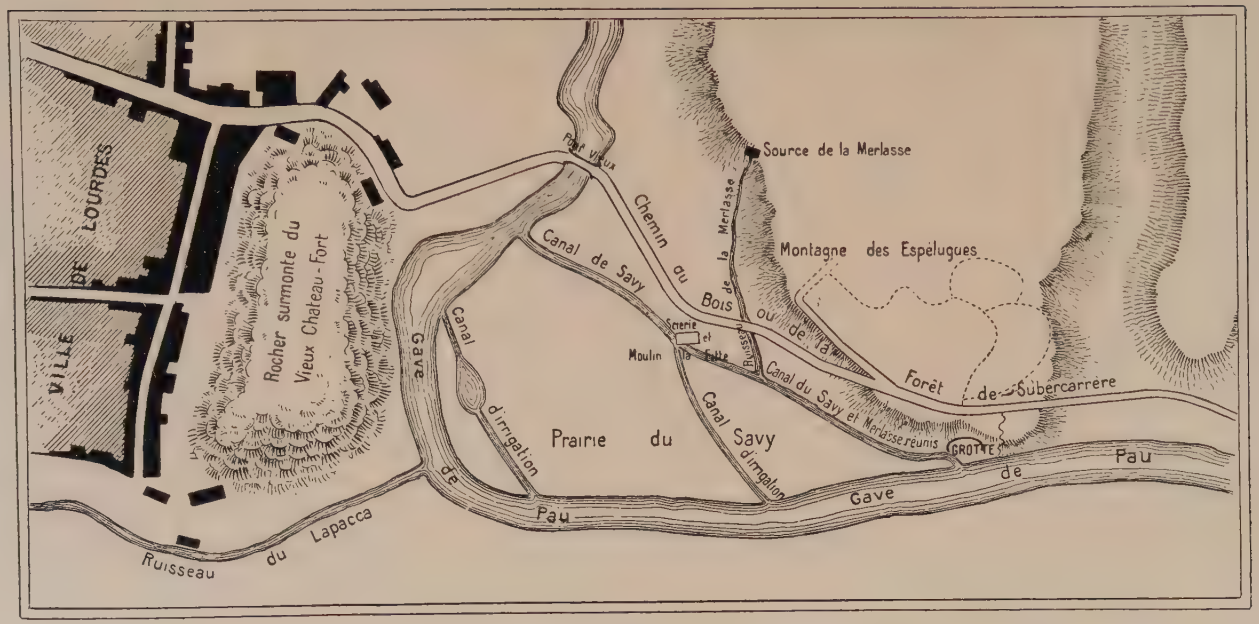
"Oh! my goodness, no," replied the little monkey; "you're a nuisance and a mollycoddle. Stay where you are if you don't want to cross."

And, without troubling herself any further about her companion, she picked up the faggots she had gathered and went farther down the Gave with Marie.

Left alone, Bernadette tried to make a dry passage for herself by throwing large stones into the water, but all her efforts were in vain, and she, too, had to paddle through the cold water. It was now about half-past twelve.

Hardly had the child begun to take off her stockings before she heard a loud noise like the advent of a storm. She looked all around, but not a branch moved on the poplars near the river. Thinking, therefore, that she was deceived, she quietly went on taking off her stockings. But almost directly she heard the same noise again. Frightened and apprehensive, she hurriedly rose, and searched with her eyes to the right and left. Everything was quiet by the Gave, but on the other side of the canal, some feet from the bank where she stood, a wild briar bush, which grew on the outer side to the right of the Grotto, was being blown about as if by a strong wind. At the same moment that the child noticed this phenomenon, a golden cloud arose from the opening in the rock which the briar was beating with its branches, and a woman appeared above the bush in the cleft which formed a kind of natural niche.

SOUTH



NORTH

MAP OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THE MASSABIEILLE ROCKS AT THE TIME OF THE APPARITIONS

"She was young and beautiful," said Bernadette; "more beautiful than any one I had ever seen. She looked and smiled at me, and made me a sign to come forward without fear. And indeed I was no longer afraid, but I did not seem to know any more where I was."

Instinctively the child took her rosary and knelt down.

"The Lady let me pray all alone," she said, "while she herself let her beads pass through her fingers without speaking—only at the end of each decade she said with me: 'Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto.'"

As a matter of fact, although the child was too simple to realise it, this was the only part of the rosary which the "Lady" could rightly say; for the requests made in the *Pater* are only for those who do not possess the fulness of grace; and as for the *Ave Maria*, the apparition simply could not say it. One cannot pray to one's self. On the other hand, there was nothing to prevent her mingling her heavenly voice with an earthly one, to sing the praises of the Blessed Trinity, in the very canticle of Heaven:

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord; glory be to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

"When the rosary was at an end," adds Bernadette, "the Lady retired within the rock, and the golden cloud disappeared with her."

Thus the heavenly brightness had preceded her when she was about to appear, and followed her when she disappeared, as the light of the sun precedes that celestial body when it rises, and follows it when it sets.

There was nothing vague or shadowy in the

divinely beautiful being which had manifested itself to the ravished eyes of Bernadette. The latter has described it many times with perfect clearness.

"The Lady looks like a young girl of about sixteen or seventeen," she would say. "She wears a white dress; round her waist is a blue ribbon which falls the length of the dress almost to the ground. On her head her hair can hardly be seen for a white veil which falls behind, over her shoulders and below the waist.

"On her naked feet, which are almost hidden by the folds of the dress, are golden-coloured rosettes.

"In her right hand she holds a rosary with white beads, and a golden chain which glitters like the rosettes on her feet."

Bernadette was still on her knees, engrossed in the ravishing sight which she had just beheld, when Jeanne and Marie returned to the Grotto. Seeing her praying at such a time and in such a place, they made fun of her, and told her somewhat sharply to make haste and return with them. They all three made faggots of the wood they had gathered, and turned their steps towards the town. As they went Bernadette asked her little companions if they had noticed nothing extraordinary in the Massabieille Grotto.

"No, nothing," they replied. "But why do you ask?"

"Oh, nothing!"

At first she wished to keep her secret; but when she was alone with Marie she could not resist telling her about all that filled her mind; she related her vision, and begged her sister to tell no one. The

whole day long the image of the ideal being whom she had seen was present in her mind. When the evening came, and with it family prayers, the remembrance became still more acute and still more vivid, and, overcome by emotion, she began to cry.

"What is the matter, Bernadette?" asked her mother.

Marie did not give her time to reply, but related all that had happened at the Massabieille rocks.

"These things are illusions, my child," said Mme. Soubirous seriously. "You must not allow such ideas in your mind; send them away, and above all do not return to Massabieille."

"We went to bed," says Bernadette, "but I could not sleep. The kind and gracious face of the Lady kept coming back to my mind, and it was useless to remember what my mother had told me; I could not believe that I had been mistaken."

. . . . . .

Such was the first apparition.

This scene was enacted eighteen times. On Friday, February 12th, and Saturday the 13th, Bernadette, who could think of nothing but what she had seen, longed to return to the Grotto, but she was withheld by obedience. At length on Sunday the 14th, her sister Marie and Jeanne Abadie asked for her the permission which she so ardently longed for. Mme. Soubirous refused at first, but on being eagerly pressed she thought that a return to Massabieille, where she would assuredly see nothing, would be the very best means of curing Bernadette of the foolish notions which haunted her, and, giving way at last, she said to the two young sisters:

"Go along, then, and don't worry me any more!

But be back in time for Vespers, or you know what is in store for you!"

As soon as Marie had told five or six of her little companions, they set out, but not without first providing themselves with a bottle of holy water. Mme. Soubirous had spoken of the devil, who sometimes makes a plaything of man, and, although Bernadette was absolutely sure in her own mind that what she had seen was not the devil, she followed the advice of her little friends, and took every precaution.

They quickly arrived at Massabieille. Bernadette knelt down in front of the briar bush. For a few moments she prayed in silence, then, suddenly, as if delirious with joy, she was heard to say:

"She is there! . . . She is there!"

One of her companions, Marie Hillot, at once said to her:

"Quick, throw holy water at her," and she passed the bottle.

Bernadette threw the holy water towards the bush, then she said to her companions:

"She is not angry; on the contrary, she nods approvingly and is smiling."

All the little girls had formed a semicircle around her, and were on their knees. Bernadette's face became strangely pale, then calm and bright; she seemed transformed. At this sight her companions were frightened; most of them burst into tears, and one cried out:

"Oh, if Bernadette were to die!"

They went closer to her, and called her affectionately by name. But she did not seem to hear them; her eyes were fixed on the niche behind the briar,

and she seemed lost in the contemplation of a heavenly spectacle visible to her alone. At this moment, the mother and sister of the miller Nicolau arrived on the scene from the mill, which was close at hand. Seeing Bernadette in ecstasy, they spoke to her gently, but she did not hear. Full of faith and respect, Mme. Nicolau ran to find her son.

This son, who was twenty-eight years of age, came with an ironical smile on his lips, but, directly he saw Bernadette, he drew back in surprise, and, folding his arms, looked at her for an instant.

"Never had I seen a more striking spectacle," he said afterwards. "It was in vain I reasoned with myself; it seemed to me that I was not worthy to touch the child."

However, as his mother insisted, he took Bernadette by the arm, and led her gently to his mill, where the ecstasy at length ended.

Meanwhile the little girls had returned to the town, and had quickly spread the news. Mme. Soubirous hastened to the mill, much annoyed by what she had heard. She entered birch in hand, and went straight up to her daughter, saying angrily:

"How now, little hussy, do you wish to make us the laughing-stock of all who know us! I will give it you—with your sanctimonious airs and your tales about ladies."

And she was on the point of striking her daughter when Mme. Nicolau interposed and prevented the blow, crying: "What are you doing! What has your daughter done that you should treat her so? Just now I saw her on her knees, and never shall I forget the sight; it was like that of an angel—a real angel from heaven."

After this Mme. Soubirous kept her daughter away from the Grotto for three or four days. On February 18th, persuaded by some ladies of the town, however, she allowed her to return with them to the Grotto, very early in the morning. After a few moments, Bernadette called out:

"She is coming . . . There she is!"

The child was trembling with happiness, praying and smiling in turn, but without giving any exterior signs of ecstasy. She rose, neared the briar bush, and, as she was asked to do, naïvely held out a piece of paper to the "Lady," begging her to write down her wishes.

Whereat the apparition replied:

"It is not necessary for me to write what I have to say to you." Then she asked Bernadette to return for a fortnight, and said to her: "I promise to make you happy, not in this world, but in the next."

After this, however worried they might feel, the parents of the child-visionary no longer dared forbid her go to Massabieille. Her mother herself accompanied her with one of her aunts early on the morrow (19th). A few neighbours, guessing their secret, followed them. Bernadette passed quickly into ecstasy. Her face was covered with ineffable smiles, and what appeared like waves of heavenly joy; she seemed to belong to this world no more.

"O God," cried her mother, trembling with emotion, "do not take my child from me."

At the same time a voice from among those present was heard to say, "Oh, how beautiful she is!"

The fifth apparition took place on the morning of the 20th February, about half-past six o'clock. Madame Soubirous, near her child, whose face was lit in ecstasy, cried out: "I do not know where I am—I seem to be dreaming—I do not recognise my daughter."

The people round about were equally amazed and bewildered.

There were hundreds of people present on this day, for the whole town was talking of the strange events. Some declared that they were miraculous; others, and especially the better educated, smiled contemptuously, saying it was merely a nervous phenomenon well known to science.

One of the latter, however, and not the least among them, Dr. Dozous, was not content, like the majority, with judging superficially. He took the trouble to go and investigate matters for himself. Thus it happened that he came across a most extraordinary pathological case, for his religious incredulity did not allow of his calling it by any other name. On the morrow, Sunday, February 21st, he was waiting at the foot of the Massabieille rock, and he was present at the sixth apparition, of which he has published an account. This account is interesting as being that, not only of an unbeliever, but of a doctor who had come to investigate scientifically the morbid condition of a patient.

"As soon as Bernadette was before the Grotto," writes Dr. Dozous, "she knelt down, took her rosary out of pocket, and began to tell her beads. Soon her face altered; a fact which was remarked by all those near her, and which indicated that she

was seeing the apparition. Whilst with the left hand she told her beads, in the right she held a burning candle, which was frequently blown out by a strong breeze coming up from the Gave. Each time this happened she passed the candle to some one close at hand to re-light.

"I followed Bernadette's movements very attentively, so as to be able to study her completely, from several points of view, and at this precise moment I wanted to know the state of her circulation and respiration. I took hold of her arm, and placed my fingers on the radial artery. The pulse was quiet and regular, the breathing easy. There was nothing to indicate that nervous over-excitement might be reacting on the organism in a special way. As soon as I let go her arm, Bernadette moved higher up towards the Grotto. I noticed that her face, which until then had looked perfectly happy, began to wear an expression of sadness. Two great tears fell from her eyes and coursed down her cheeks. This change surprised me, and, when she had finished her prayers and the mysterious being had disappeared, I asked her what had been taking place all this long time, and she replied:

"'The Lady for an instant did not look at me, but looked beyond my head and then again at me. I asked her what made her sad, and she said: "Pray for poor sinners; pray for the world which is in such trouble." I was quickly reassured, however, by the kind and peaceful expression on her face, and just then she disappeared.'

"When leaving the spot where the general excitement had been so great," Dr. Dozous adds, "Bernadette retired, as always, modestly and simply, without

paying attention to the public ovation of which she was the object."

The crowd dispersed to their homes, full of admiration for Bernadette in her ecstasy, saying that she must have seen a heavenly being for her face to have reflected such a heavenly beauty. Popular emotion rapidly increased, and those who had the duty of watching over the public peace thought that it was time to interfere. Perhaps, without knowing it, they were obeying that spontaneous antipathy of those in power for any supernatural manifestations. Such people seem to think that God is intruding in the world. Their avowed motive, however, was that the proximity of the Gave made it dangerous for large crowds to gather near the Massabieille rocks.

On the very morning of February 21st, M. Lacadé, the mayor of the town, M. Dutour, procurator, and M. Jacomet, the superintendent of police, met at the town-hall, and decided to prevent any further manifestations, without, however, annoying the crowd. The best means to do this seemed to be to persuade Bernadette not to return to the Grotto. They did not doubt but that the little child would be unable to resist municipal authority—an authority which would, if necessary, become threatening.

The procurator therefore had Bernadette brought into his office. He was a most worthy man, and of inflexible opinions. He thought that it would be mere play to overcome the child should she offer any resistance. But to his surprise, his ability and his powers were of no avail against her ignorance and weakness. Ending his cross-examination brusquely, he said to Bernadette:

"Will you promise me not to return to Massabieille?"

"No, sir. I will not promise you."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well then, go . . . we will see about it."

In the evening the police superintendent tried what he could do. He ordered the visionary to his office. The questioning took a long time, and was both threatening and insidious. M. Estrade, the rate-collector, was present, and has described the scene.

The police superintendent also requested Bernadette not to go to the Grotto again.

"Sir," she replied very simply, "I promised the Lady to go back."

"If you will not immediately promise not to return to Massabieille, I will send for the police and put you in prison."

But Bernadette remained firm. A voice within her spoke louder than all these threats.

On the morrow, February 22nd, Bernadette was again at the heavenly meeting-place. Two policemen followed her, as did a considerable and curious crowd. She went to her usual place; but on this day her face showed no sign of ecstasy, and when she rose she declared that the "Lady" had not appeared. It was a cruel deception for her. The wits were triumphant: "The Lady fears the police," they cried, and laughed loudly at their joke. "Perhaps if M. Jacomet has a finger in the pie, she will think it more prudent to pack off and find another domicile."

"I too laughed with them," says M. Estrade, "little thinking I should soon have cause to leave them."

The very next day, as it happened, M. Estrade was at the Grotto, in company with his sister, but he was still incredulous. The day had hardly dawned before nearly two hundred people arrived, and among them three or four gentlemen whose presence reassured the new visitor. M. Estrade has described the scene, which was the seventh of the same kind.

"Bernadette knelt down, and while she began to tell her beads she looked at the rock longingly and inquiringly. Suddenly, as if struck by lightning, she gave a start of wondering admiration, and seemed as if she belonged to another world. Her eyes brightened and became glittering, heavenly smiles hovered round her lips, and an indefinable grace filled her whole person. Bernadette was no longer Bernadette.

"Spontaneously and unanimously all the men present uncovered and bowed their heads. After the first transports caused by the 'Lady's' arrival, the seer assumed the attitude of a person who listens. Her gestures, her face, reproduced, one after the other, all the phases of a conversation. Now and again Bernadette nodded approval with her head, or herself seemed to be asking questions. When the Lady spoke, she thrilled with happiness, but when she made her own petitions she became humble and even tearful. At certain times it was plainly visible that no conversation was taking place; then the child returned to her rosary, keeping her eyes fixed on the rock, as if she were afraid of lowering them, for one minute even, lest she should lose sight of the lovely vision.

"The ecstasy lasted about an hour. Towards

the end, the visionary went forward on her knees until she reached the point just under where the briar bush hung from the rock. There she remained recollected for a moment as if in adoration, then kissed the earth, and came back to her starting point, always on her knees. Her face lit up as if with a last flash, then, very gradually and almost imperceptibly, the ecstasy left her. The visionary continued to pray some moments longer, but it was the charming but rustic little figure of the Soubirous' child that we saw before us. Finally Bernadette rose, approached her mother, and was soon lost in the crowd."

The new spectator, who had come to scoff, did not indulge in ironical pleasantries. He was touched, troubled, and completely upset. He went away alone, forgetting his sister and her friends, whom he was accompanying.

"I was like a man awakening from a dream," he said. "I could not overcome my emotion, and my thoughts were all in a whirl. It was in vain that the Lady of the rock had veiled her presence, for I had really felt it."[1]

The Source

On Wednesday, February 24th, the ecstasy took place again.

For a moment, the child turned towards the spectators; with tearful face and sobbing voice she repeated three times—"Penance, penance, penance!"

[1] J. B. Estrade, *The Apparitions of Lourdes, the Memories of an Eye-witness.* Mame, 1899.

She declared afterwards that these were the very words she had heard the "Lady" utter.

The next day was a day of probation for all those who believed in the reality of the apparitions.

"After a few minutes' meditation," relates the same witness, "Bernadette rose to approach the Grotto. As she went she moved aside the branches of the briar bush, and stooped to kiss the earth just beyond. Then she came down the slope again, and, having collected herself, she fell once more into an ecstasy.

"At the end of two or three decades of her rosary, the visionary rose again and became embarrassed. She hesitated, turned towards the Gave, and took two or three steps forward. Suddenly she stopped, looked behind her like one who is called, and listened to words which seemed to come from the direction of the rock.

"She made a sign in the affirmative, moved on, but not towards the Gave; she went towards the left-hand corner of the Grotto. Three-quarters of the way up the slope she halted, and looked around as if perplexed. She raised her head as if to question the Lady, then, resolutely, she stooped down and began to scratch the ground with her hands. The little hole she managed to scoop out, filled with water. She waited a moment, drank some, and then washed her face, after which she took a blade of grass which was growing at her feet and put it in her mouth. The spectators gazed at this strange scene, feeling upset and bewildered. When the child rose again to return to her place, her face was begrimed with muddy water. At this sight arose a

cry of mistaken pity: 'Bernadette has lost her head, the poor child is going mad!'

"Bernadette returned to her place without appearing to notice the exclamations on all sides. After her face had been wiped, she returned to her celestial vision, happier than ever, and an angelic smile on her face."

But the impression created among the spectators was unfavourable. There was no more thought of admiration for Bernadette—only pity. When those who had been astonished, and also deceived by what they had seen at the Grotto, questioned her, she replied very simply:

"When I was praying, the Lady said to me: 'Go and drink and wash yourself at the source.' As I did not see any source, I went towards the Gave. The Lady called me back, and made me a sign with her finger to go to the left of the Grotto. I obeyed, but I did not see any water. Not knowing what to do, I raked up the earth and some came. I let it settle a little, and then I drank some and washed myself."

The water which began to well up under her fingers was at first hardly sufficient to make more than a muddy puddle. The most fervent carried away some of this mud, moistened by a mysterious spring which arrived drop by drop from unknown depths.

Dr. Dozous, who was one of the best situated for observing this important event, would not leave the Grotto of Massobieille without having first carefully explored all the different parts of the ground. He says: "I found that it was dry everywhere except where Bernadette had hollowed a little hole

with her hands, and whence the spring had immediately flowed."[1]

The jet of water went on increasing in volume the whole day: the next day, when the people returned to the spot, it was as big as a finger; a few days later it had attained the thickness of a child's arm. Ever since it has been a powerful jet of limpid water, and is now the magnificent source which feeds fifteen taps and easily fills the nine piscinas which contain the baths for the sick.[2]

This extraordinary event disconcerted the incredulous, who had been too hasty in their triumph, and it reanimated the wavering faith of believers.

On Friday, February 26th, the apparition returned for the tenth time. On arriving at Massabieille, Bernadette went and knelt on the top of the slope, at the spot where the day before she had hollowed with her hands a little hole about the size of a tumbler. Without exhibiting any surprise at seeing the water flowing so freely, she piously made the sign of the cross, drank some of the water, and washed her face.

On the next day, Saturday, the ecstasy continued for a longer time than before. The heavenly voice spoke to the visionary, and gave her this message: "Go and tell the priests to build me a chapel here."

A little later we shall see how very reserved, not to say hostile, the priests were with regard to the events then taking place.

However, the excitement was now irresistible,

[1] Dr. Dozous, *La Grotte de Lourdes* (Paris, Guerin-Muller), pp. 53, 54.

[2] It gives out 122,000 litres in twenty-four hours.

and on Sunday, February 28th, more than two thousand spectators assembled around the rock. For the twelfth time an ecstasy took place, as it did again on the morrow, March 1st, and the following day yet again. But on the Wednesday it was in vain that Bernadette prayed with her habitual fervour; her face was not illuminated by that heavenly radiance which made her look so beautiful. When she had finished her prayer, she said to the people who questioned her: "The Lady has not come to-day."

The "Lady" had asked her to go to the Grotto for fifteen days. The last day of this fortnight would be on the morrow, Thursday, March 4th.

Without knowing exactly why, there was a feeling of expectation that some new prodigy would take place. The crowd was immense, and could not have been under fifteen or twenty thousand people at the very least.

The "Lady" came, the ecstasy lasted more than an hour, but all happened just as usual. There was no miraculous sign given to the crowd, who were consequently disappointed. As they went away, Bernadette was asked if she would return to the Grotto.

"Oh yes," she replied, "I shall come back, but I do not know whether the Lady will reappear. I only know that she smiled at me when she went away, and that she did not bid me good-bye."

"*I am the Immaculate Conception*"

So the child went back with confidence, and very often. But the mysterious being did not show herself, and Bernadette was not ravished in ecstasy.

At last, on March 25th, the feast of the Annunciation, she started to go to Massabieille very early in the morning, and with a heart full of hope. It was twenty days since she had last seen the heavenly vision.

She hurried along. What a joyful surprise met her eyes when she arrived! The niche in the rock was full of a divine brilliance, and the white vision was there, her feet on the briar bush as if she were waiting. Bernadette threw herself on her knees, and after praying for a long time the idea came to her to ask the "Lady" if she would say who she was. At first the "Lady" smiled without replying. Very humbly the visionary repeated her question a second and a third time.

"The third time," she said, "the Lady joined her hands and raised them to her breast. . . . She looked heavenwards . . . then slowly separating her hands and leaning towards me, she said:

"'*I am the Immaculate Conception.*'"

It was a great revelation. When the spectators learned the news, they were transported with religious enthusiasm. They fell on their knees, and everywhere, where the dense crowd had gathered, on the banks of the Gave, or the mountain height, resounded the popular prayer:

"O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse unto thee."

. . . . . .

Twelve days went by without Bernadette seeing the Queen of Heaven come to lighten up the rocks. But on April 7th, both vision and ecstasy were renewed, and again three months later on July 16th. This was the eighteenth apparition, and the last.

Bernadette lived for twenty years longer, but the heavenly spectacle never again met her dazzled and ravished eyes. She went back into the shade, and was lost among the crowd. Every morning she could be seen going to the school kept by the Sisters of the hospital, with an old torn satchel containing the stocking she was knitting, her spelling-book, and a piece of black bread for her dinner.

Some time later the nuns had pity on this delicate child, and took her to live with them as a poor invalid. It was here that, between eighteen and nineteen years of age, she finished learning how to read and write. Thus, too, she learned community life, and wished to make it her own, and at twenty-two she left for Nevers, where was the mother-house of the order. Here she lived until the age of thirty-five as the humblest of nuns. She felt leaving the Grotto very deeply, for her visits to it had become a very pleasant habit during the eight years that she lived at Lourdes after the apparitions.

The way to the Massabieille rocks, first trodden by this child, was becoming wider and wider under the footsteps of crowds attracted by fame. It was soon to become one of the most frequented roads of the world.

CHAPTER II

REALITY OF THE APPARITIONS

The sincerity of Bernadette—Her simplicity and disinterestedness—Her persuasive frankness—Circumstances which prove her good faith—Her assertion on her death-bed—Bernadette and hallucination—The temperament and piety of Bernadette were antagonistic to the idea of hallucination—Comparison between Bernadette's visions and hallucinations before, during, and after the visions—Necessary conclusions.

So far we have avoided interrupting our narrative by any critical reflection or discussion, but now we will investigate matters closely.

Are the events which took place at Massabieille historical facts, or are they merely a pleasing romance to afford food for naïve and pious souls?

The question is a serious one deserving attentive consideration, whatever may be our first impressions. To put it on one side because of an obstinate prejudice against the supernatural, is a deplorable method, unworthy of a fair-minded antagonist. Was Bernadette in good faith when she told her tale, and, if in good faith, was she not the dupe of her vivid imagination? This we must honestly try to find out. For if Bernadette was sincere, and if she was not self-deceived, her evidence must be accepted as proving the supernatural reality of the apparition.

Let us carefully examine both these points.

The Sincerity of Bernadette

Even those who are most loth to admit the divine nature of the visions at Massabieille seldom contest the sincerity of the seer.

Indeed it is hardly possible to doubt it. How could this little child of the people, so simple and ignorant and modest, who never showed the least desire to take advantage of her successes, play such a comedy knowingly, without hitch or lack of memory and in spite of so many obstacles? At the time she could not even read, she had not been able to make her first Communion, and her intelligence was beneath that of other children of her age. She could not speak French, but expressed herself in the patois of her country.

Evidently hers was not the brain to conceive such a gigantic project to mystify the world. Besides, why should she wish so to do? Let us dwell a little on her extraordinary disinterestedness. She never, even from vanity, took advantage of her visions. She would willingly have avoided the numerous visitors who soon crowded around her to hear the story from her own lips, and it was purely out of obedience to the good nuns who kept her that she received them at the hospital. One day an attack of asthma kept her in bed, and some one condoled with her on the fact.

"Oh, don't pity me," she said; "I like this far better than being in the parlour." With regard to the numberless presents which were offered her, nothing could ever persuade her to accept a single one. And, what was still more remarkable, her family showed absolutely the same disinterestedness.

And yet the Soubirous were actually in need of bread. Touched by the sight of the wan faces which betrayed such abject poverty, their rich visitors generously opened their purses, but they always had to shut them up again, for it was impossible to overcome the unwavering resistance of such proud poverty. Well-to-do Bearnese peasants often came with baskets full of choice provisions, to make offerings to the celestial apparition in the person of the needy visionary. But these good people always went away with their baskets untouched and full of astonishment that so poverty-stricken a family persisted in refusing the good things they were offered.[1]

As for Bernadette, one day she was at the house of M. Estrade who tells the story, when a distinguished foreigner, a lady, came there to see her.[2]

In going away the stranger embraced her effusively, and put a gold coin into the apron of the little peasant. The child jumped up with a bound, as if a burning coal had touched her, and the coin fell to the ground. She picked it up at once, a little confused at her brusque movement, and returned it to the charitable lady with her excuses. No entreaties could prevail on her to take it back.

All those who came in contact with this child living in extreme misery were much struck by her absolute contempt for money. During the retreat she made in preparation for her first Communion, a rich lady, who was staying at Lourdes, tried in vain to have a moment's conversation with her. She managed, however, to succeed on the eve of the feast.

[1] Dozous, *La Grotte de Lourdes,* pp. 94–96.

[2] *Les Apparitions de Lourdes,* p. 285.

The next day, in a letter to Mgr. Laurence, M. Peyramale, the parish priest at Lourdes, wrote as follows:—

"Yesterday evening, after vespers at the convent, the strange lady saw Bernadette. She tried very hard to make her accept some money, but the child absolutely refused, with a feeling of wounded dignity.

"In the moral order it is the greatest phenomenon to see this child of the people, so poor that she is often in need of bread, refuse with so much dignity the offers she receives." [1]

Dr. Dozous, in his turn, wrote: "Humble and modest child, detached from earthly goods, allow a man who has had the happy privilege of tending your health, at one time delicate, allow him to speak of your poverty. You might have, had you so wished, become powerful in the possession of the gold which was held before your eyes, yet without dazzling them. Let me tell those who have so much calumniated you what I have often witnessed myself. You were poor, but you did not choose to emerge from your poverty by accepting the profuse gifts of all kinds offered you by the good souls attracted to the place of your prayers." [2]

It was, then, neither cupidity nor pride which led her to play the part she did, even if, which was impossible, the idea had germinated in the narrow brain of this ignorant child.

Besides which, for all those who heard her speak, her tone could leave no room for doubting her sincerity. One day, unfavourably impressed by her

[1] *Records of the Grotto*, Lourdes.

[2] Work quoted, p. 94.

goings-on in the Grotto, M. Clarens, director of the High School at Lourdes, went to see her parents to question them. He went in a thoroughly sceptical frame of mind.

But the "indifference with which Bernadette spoke to me," he wrote, "the natural charm of her narrative, the confident tone of her replies, the naïvete of her remarks quite shook my previous convictions. Go and see her, you who are so intellectual, and you will not come away without being overwhelmed."[1]

The imperial procurator himself did not escape the effects of her charm. In a note which he has left of the cross-examination he made her undergo, he thus expresses himself: "When she spoke, her naïve language, her soft and firm accent, won the confidence of those who listened. The charm of her countenance was all the more pleasing and touching on account of its frankness."

And speaking of himself in the third person, M. Dutour adds: "Although somewhat prejudiced, the imperial procurator, after seeing and hearing Bernadette, on February 21st, shared, not without serious reason, the opinion of the majority as to the child's sincerity." Henceforth he believed in her, and never again did he imagine for a moment that she was an impostor.[2]

We have seen how the municipal authority tried to prevent the people from assembling round the Grotto.

His efforts having fallen through, M. Massy, the

[1] *La Grotte mystérieuse de Lourdes*, &c., in *N. D. de Lourdes*, by Père Cros, pp. 88, 89.

[2] Cros, *ibid.* pp. 52, 53.

prefect of Tarbes, had a brilliant idea; namely, to suppress the visions by suppressing the visionary.

He wrote, then, on March 25th to the Mayor of Lourdes to have Bernadette examined by a medical jury, and if the jury found her to be subject to hallucinations—which, of course, he thought would be the inevitable result—to shut her up, if possible, in a lunatic asylum. The three members of this tribunal were carefully chosen from among those who had hitherto declared the existence of hallucination to be certain, but who had never been to Massabieille. Six days after, the report was ready and signed.

The investigators had subjected the simple child to a long, minute, insidious, and hostile examination. Her clear, frank replies surprised and touched them. Of course they could not see, and they did not see in her ecstasies anything but the effects of a sickly imagination. Their conclusions were drawn beforehand. They even risked an explanation of the phenomenon which creates a smile nowadays, but their good faith did not permit of their finding in the condition of the supposed invalid anything which authorised her being sent away. They somewhat overstretched the limits of their mission, and loyally declared that her "sincerity did not appear doubtful."

This is the point to be made a note of and remembered! Their appreciation as to the nature of the apparitions was entirely due to their philosophical opinions. Some of them modified their views shortly afterwards. But the sincerity of the child is a fact which the evidence of opponents, given after so minute an examination, ought to

render definitely assured. Moreover, the assertions of Bernadette were made in a way which prohibits any fear of bad faith. She had no intention of going to Massabieille, the day on which the first vision took place. It happened that as they left the town the three children met Mme. Cazaux, who was washing near the Pont Vieux. "They said to me," she relates, "'Tata, where shall we find some dry wood?' I replied: 'Near the little wood at Massabieille.'"

It would be necessary to cross the field belonging to M. de la Fitte, who had lately had some trees felled. Mme. Cazaux assured them that they would find plenty of branches there too, but Bernadette did not wish to go lest they should be taken for thieves. However, her two companions quickly passed over the bridge, and Bernadette had to follow.[1]

Thus she reached, almost against her will, the spot where she was to taste the sweetness of ecstasy. Never has an event been less premeditated, more spontaneous, or more evidently unexpected by any heroine.

Yet the celestial scene, which she had never had the slightest idea of contemplating, became an actual fact which nothing could prevent her from relating with assurance and absolute clearness. They tried to trip her up by subtle questions, and to make her contradict herself in her story, but without success. This child, usually so dull, seemed sharp and decided on this subject. Sure of herself, her ingenuous frankness pervaded her replies with a decision and good sense that disconcerted the cleverness of the

[1] See the evidence in Cros, *Notre Dame de Lourdes*, pp. 12, 13.

interrogators. Even the police superintendent, accustomed as he was to intricate examinations, was obliged to admit that he was powerless to embarrass her sincerity.

One day a Roman noble asked her some insignificant details with the purpose of making her contradict herself. As always, she passed through the trial with perfect ease. The stranger returned several times to the charge. Finally raising his voice as if to frighten her by his assurance, he said roughly:

"You pretend that you have seen the Blessed Virgin: well, I tell you, that you have not seen her."

This disturbed her usual calmness, and she replied hotly: "I have seen her—yes, I have seen her, and seen her well too."

"How did you see her?" replied the stranger.

Bernadette, who was just beginning to talk French, replied with a delightful lack of grammar:

"Je l'ai vue avec mes *œils*."

After this long cross-examination, the Italian avowed himself vanquished, and was touched, even to tears, when he left her, declaring that she was "the earthly messenger of a heavenly queen."[1]

Shortly afterwards the Bishop of Tarbes formed a commission to make an official investigation of the marvellous happenings in the Grotto. This commission first sat five months after the last apparition.

First of all, the Mass of the Holy Ghost was sung in the parish church; then Bernadette was sent for, and publicly subjected to a long examination. The

[1] Dozous, work already quoted, p. 88. This Italian was called Rafaello Ginnasi.

precision and simplicity of her replies much touched the commission. The president inquired if she could swear as to the truth of her assertion.

She pondered a moment, and, with a religious seriousness which struck all those present, she raised her hand before God, and said firmly, "I swear."

During eight years—that is, as long as she remained at Lourdes after her visions—Bernadette was questioned in a thousand ways, by thousands of different visitors, as many as twenty times a day. All sorts of objections were brought forward. She was made to give an infinity of details; all kinds of traps were laid for her; but never once did any one succeed in making her contradict herself, or even hesitate, as do those who do not tell the truth when they have to speak often on the same subject, and especially when they are being tried.

Bernadette came through her trials gloriously. When the hour of death came, she did not have to retract a single word. It was on December 12, 1878, twenty years *after the visions at Massabieille*, that, represented by the delegates of the Bishops of Tarbes and Nevers, the Church wished to interrogate the visionary for the last time at the hour when the thought of soon appearing before God should inspire so deeply religious a mind with a horror of lying. Bernadette was unable to leave the infirmary of the Convent of Saint Gildard; she was stretched on the bed of suffering from which she was never again to rise. The Superior-General and her assistants were all around her when the episcopal representatives began their important interrogation.

By a remarkable exception, the sick person now

seemed quite happy to speak about the wonders which had ravished her. In her harmonious Pyrenean language she retold the words of the Immaculate Virgin, and she described what she had seen, as she had done so many times before. In the presence of death, under the shadow of the Sovereign Judge before whom she was soon to appear, the evidence of the nun echoed the evidence of the child, adding to it the sanction of the grave and of eternity.

Bernadette died saying: "I saw her—yes, I saw her."

The Visions of Bernadette and Hallucinations

But if her good faith is certain, if no one doubts, and if it is impossible to doubt that she believed she really saw and heard what she declares she saw and heard, was she not the victim of an illusion which she afterwards innocently caused others to share? According to those who reject the supernatural reality of the apparitions, Bernadette was the plaything of a nervous temperament which produced in her hallucinations of sight and sound. If the reader has heard incredulous people talking about Lourdes, he can bear witness to the fact that this is the only reason on which they establish their negation. They cannot find, or think of any other.[1]

[1] We need not mention here a fable referring to the name of an honourable family of Lourdes. This tale is not only false and unlikely, but ridiculous, and does not deserve a place in a serious discussion. Still, if the reader wishes to be informed, he may refer to Note I., p. 289, in the Appendix; and to p. 361 of the French edition of this work, *Histoire Critique des Evènements de Lourdes*, pub. Rue Bonaparte, 90, Paris.

This brings us to the very heart of the discussion. It must be conducted with absolute impartiality and without prejudice, just as if we had to establish, or otherwise, the historic reality of any celebrated event, such, for example, as the battle of Bouvines or the passing of the Rubicon by Cæsar.

A Catholic may freely discuss the matter, provided he do so in a spirit of humble submissiveness to the guidance already given, or hereafter to be given, by Holy Church.

The Temperament and the Piety of Bernadette were not conducive to Hallucinations

To be under the influence of a nervous temperament, the first condition is evidently—to have a nervous temperament. Was this the case with Bernadette?

We know that she suffered from asthma, but we know of no other disease. There is no indication whatever to prove that her nerves were weak. It is needless to bring forward her visions, for this is the very question: To know whether her visions had any relation whatever to her nerves. She never presented any of the symptoms to be found in neurotic people either before or after the events at Massabieille. On the contrary, her character was peaceful, healthy, and with nothing resembling morbidity. She liked to play with other children of her own age, and her good spirits never left her.

When she was at Nevers, the chaplain remarked that when her asthma left her she was as gay and lively as a child.

"She would run and jump in the garden," he said. "She was naturally gay, and with a gaiety that was simple and frank and childlike."[1]

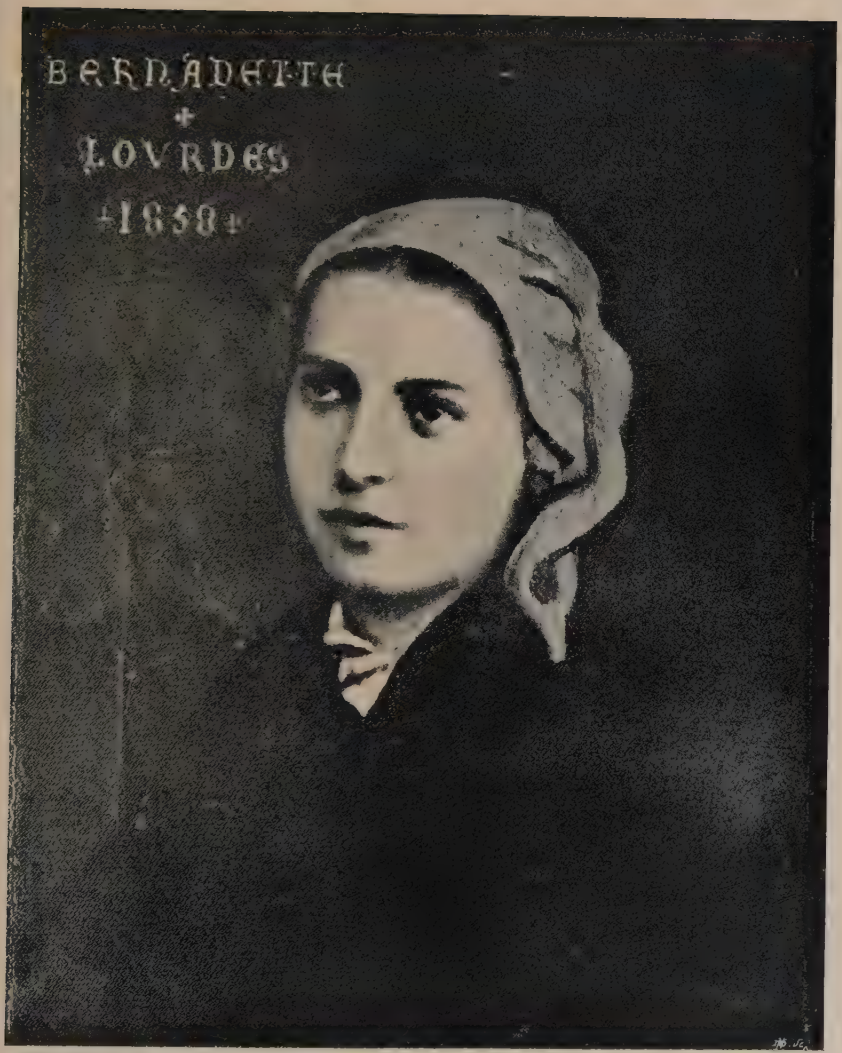
Let us add that the exaltation of which she must be accused—if she be accused—would be religious exaltation, since it resulted in religious hallucinations. But her piety when she enjoyed her heavenly visions was no more than that of other children of her age. She had not even made her first Communion, nor consequently followed those religious exercises whereby children are prepared for this great day of their lives. And as she did not know how to read, she had only studied the catechism with great difficulty. At Bartrès, where she passed the preceding year, Mme. Aravant, her foster-mother, tried of an evening to teach her the rudiments.

"But," said the improvised professor later on, with an affectionate smile, "it was in vain I repeated my lessons. It was no good, and I had always to begin again. Sometimes I got very impatient, and I would throw the book on one side, saying: 'Get along then, you will never be anything but a silly and an ignoramus.'"[2]

Such was Bernadette's religious and mental attitude when Our Lady appeared to her for the first time. It can hardly be pretended that it was one which paved the way to mystical over-excitement of any kind. Besides, she never had the slightest tendency to mysticism except during that period of her life which followed her ecstasies.

[1] See Cros, *Notre Dame de Lourdes*, p. 324. See also Appendix, Note II., p. 290, for the evidence of her doctor, Dr. Robert Saint-Cyr.

[2] Estrade, *Les Apparitions de Lourdes*, p. 27.



BERNADETTE SOUBIROUS

If there is any special epoch of a child's life when the symptoms of an extraordinary piety are revealed, it is during the preparation for the first Communion. But during this time there was to be found nothing in Bernadette's behaviour which distinguished her from the rest of her companions; no unusual emotion or exceptional recollection; she had her distractions, and was wilful just like the others. Later, when living with the Sisters at the Home, her devotion was simple and straightforward without attracting attention. Sister Victorine, who had especial charge of her, said with regard to this time:

"Her piety was very ordinary during several years. One day I said to her: 'At your age you ought to go to the chapel and meditate a little; and she replied, 'Oh, *I* don't know how to meditate.'"[1]

Such was this simple soul of a shepherd girl! Not only was she not inclined to mystical contemplation, but she had neither the faculty nor the taste to reflect even for a few moments on a dogmatic or moral truth. It may well be admitted, that she could not be a less suitable subject for religious hallucination. Her even temperament preserved her from hallucination in general, and if she had any tendency that way, the directness of her soul would have prevented her from mixing religion with her sick dreams. To have religious hallucination, she would have had to go against both her physical and her moral dispositions.

Even then, what would have been their source? Whence would such hallucinations have come?

[1] Cros, work quoted, p. 212.

It is thus both a great error and a great injustice to compare Bernadette with deluded persons, such as are found in hospitals.

To begin with, the deluded in hospitals are *subjects* for psychological experiments, and to obtain these subjects it is necessary to choose natures with peculiarly excitable nerves. By-the-by, we must point out that children are very seldom subject to hallucination. Generally the experiments are made on women, and the most nervous among young girls, people whose brains are really diseased, and who are wanting in equilibrium.

These same subjects have, moreover, to undergo a long course of preparation, and their sickly dispositions are carefully developed by methodical treatment. Only then do these unhappy people become possessed of hallucinations which resemble real visions, but are nevertheless very different. What can there be in common between these poor sick folk, whose disease has been purposely cultivated, so to speak, and the little peasant girl of the Pyrenees, the simple child of nature with her calm nerves, and an imagination as quiet as her nerves?

In order to obtain certain sounds, certain appropriate instruments are necessary. The same with hallucinations. To have them, a certain predisposition is necessary which Bernadette did not possess, either physically or morally. She was not the instrument capable of producing such peculiar notes or playing such vain melodies.

. . . . . .

We will now study the chief characteristics of hallucination. They are well known, for all physiological works published for the last fifty years have

enumerated them. We shall consult experts on the subject, and then compare the symptoms of hallucination with those that predominate in the visions of Bernadette.

The conclusion will follow logically. It will be a question of either identity or absolute difference. To make the argument clearer, these characteristics will be considered as they manifested themselves before, during, and after the events in question.

Before the Vision

On February 18, 1858, the day of the third apparition, Bernadette related how the heavenly being she had seen had asked her to return during a fortnight, proving that she believed she would enjoy the vision another fourteen times.

Now this is quite contrary to the laws of hallucination. People subject to such do not prophesy as to what they may see or hear; such a case has never been heard of. Their conviction, if they have any at all, is that they will always see what they see, and what they cannot help seeing. Not a shadow of a doubt enters their mind, for their very organism convinces them.

Moreover to return every day for a fortnight, as she did, the seer must have had a very excellent memory, perfect docility, and an exact and clear knowledge as to what she had to do, and as to where she had to do it, all things of which a deluded visionary is incapable.

. . . . . .

Add to this the fact that a combination of certain conditions is indispensable to hallucination.

With Bernadette, however, the vision took place in a variety of circumstances.

It cannot be objected that the youthful visionary needed the influence of a crowd, for on February 11th, the first day, she was alone. Nor was solitude necessary. On March 4th she was hemmed in, on all sides, by fifteen to twenty thousand spectators.

As a rule the vision appeared after Bernadette had prayed, kneeling for a few moments, but on 11th February it appeared suddenly, and without warning, while the child was taking off her shoes and stockings. On March 25th, too, when she arrived at the Grotto, she found that it was already illuminated by the apparition, which was standing there, and waiting for her, in a halo of light.

The doctors of Prefect Massy, wishing to come to the desired conclusion that it was all hallucination and illusion, found means to mention "a reflection of light" which doubtless struck the young girl. It is sufficient to be acquainted with the Grotto to know that the sun's rays never touch it—least of all, if possible at all, in February. Had a reflection fallen on the niche between noon and one o'clock—when the first apparition took place—the same could not have happened at all hours of the day without the spectators, when there were any, observing the fact. And Bernadette saw Our Lady at all hours—towards midday, as the first time; a little before Vespers, as the second; more often very early in the morning and towards evening, as in the last apparition. She saw her as she herself stood upright on the right bank of the mill stream, on her knees before the Grotto, walking in the Grotto, or as when the municipality had erected barriers from the right bank,

not of the canal, but of the Gave, which was some little distance farther away.

Thus there were no conditions necessary to her visions, which is the contrary of what happens in the dreams of delusionaries.

. . . . . .

Still more striking, perhaps, is the fact that, when the usual conditions were there, the vision did not necessarily appear. Take a delusionary, put her in a certain place, a certain position, and under a certain influence. It is as if you pressed an electric button; hallucination follows immediately. But the visions of Bernadette were in no way so mechanical. Thus for four successive days she had enjoyed the beautiful apparition which was like a foretaste of heaven to her. On Monday, February 22nd, she hurried to Massabieille happy in the thought of seeing it again. It had ever seemed to her "as if an invisible barrier had prevented her from going" to the Home where her parents had wished her to go, whilst a mysterious power had gently drawn her to the rock.

Had there been spontaneous suggestion, it would seem that this was the moment for it to take effect. She knelt down hurriedly, at the spot where she had knelt the day before. The crowd surrounded her as before. She began to pray as usual, and looked longingly at the briar bush. But in vain; she had to rise at length and declare that "the Lady had not come."

The following day the vision returned, and after that every day until March 3rd. On March 3rd Bernadette knelt and prayed as she had prayed the day before, and the day before that, but the niche

remained dark and empty to her, and her face was not lit up in ecstasy. Yet the fortnight during which the child expected the apparition was not yet up. However, as the facts go to prove, the apparition did not depend in any way on Bernadette's will, or desire, or expectations.

On March 4th, the apparition returned. The "Lady" disappeared without saying good-bye, as Bernadette naïvely said, so she hoped to see her again. In this hope she came back again and again to Massabieille, but it was not until March 25th that she had another vision. After this, twelve days passed before the apparition came again, and then three long months, when, on July 16th, it returned for the last time. As long as Bernadette remained at Lourdes she made it her habit to go and pray daily at the Grotto, but she never saw the vision again.

This is hardly the way in which hallucinations are manifested. There is a fatality about the latter which is wanting in the visions of Lourdes, which took place no matter how varied the attendant conditions, or did not take place even when the usual conditions prevailed.[1]

[1] These considerations very much disconcerted the three doctors who were entrusted to find Bernadette fit for an asylum. In 1878, two of these doctors were dead, but the third, Dr. Balencie, wrote: "We could discover nothing fraudulent in Bernadette, but we were disconcerted at the continuity of her visions. We could not accept the hypothesis of hallucination because of the variety, and yet, at the same time, the unity of the phenomena in the different apparitions. Neither could we understand why the same person, in the same place and under the same conditions, had twice (during the fortnight) been unable to see what she had seen so many other times."—V. Cros, *Notre Dame de Lourdes*, p. 168.

During the Vision

We will now consider the events in themselves and the manner in which they happened.

With delusionaries the imagination always remains somewhat hazy and vague. The forms which they see are misty and, partially at least, undetermined. But the visions of Bernadette present absolute precision in the smallest details. The eyes of the mysterious being who speaks to her from the rock, her face, her hands, her feet, her dress, veil, girdle, and rosary, all leave an impression which is fresh, clear, and settled. The visionary can, and does, describe everything. The length of the veil, the manner in which it is arranged on the head and the way in which it falls over the shoulders, the colour of the girdle, of the rosary beads and the chain, all is observed with minute exactness, nothing remains confused or indefinite. This is the first difference between the two states, and it is a very considerable one.

Another difference is that in the one case all the faculties of the subject are completely absorbed, whilst in the other the mind remains self-possessed. Left to herself, the delusionary remains fixed in the disordered impression received; she is incapable of judgment or self-control, her activity is suspended except on one single point.

Notice how differently the little visionary of Massabieille acts. Whilst enjoying her vision she throws holy water towards the briar bush, she speaks to her companions, she holds out her candle to be relighted by the nearest person each time that she notices it has gone out, she leaves her place, approaches the rock, and then goes back again. At

the time of the discovery of the spring, the apparition having told her to drink at the Source, she moves first towards the Gave because she sees no source, then she returns to the Grotto hearing herself called, hesitates a moment, and, obeying a sign made by the mysterious vision, she goes back to the left, and there seeks the spring from which she is to drink. All these movements are natural, reasonable, and varied. They are not the result of one ruling idea inspiring a kind of automaton as is hallucination.

Another difference between hallucinations and Bernadette's visions is that, whilst the latter have produced great effects, the former are always without result. The delusionary discovers nothing in her sickly dreams, she creates nothing either in her imagination or in her intellect, she does not invent, she only remembers. The phantasm she sees is composed of parts already known to her. At the most, her excited mentality can only put together, more or less grotesquely, some ancient elements collected in her memory; she is lucky if, left to herself, she does not engender the ridiculous mouse described by Horace.

The visions of Massabieille are quite different. First Bernadette, in her ecstasy, learns things which she did not know before. For instance, she hears the apparition say to her:—

"*I am the Immaculate Conception.*"

She had never heard the word before, and her naïve simplicity did not understand the profound dogma which the word contained.[1]

[1] V. Fourcade, Secretary to the Commission of Inquiry' *L'Apparition a la Grotte de Lourdes*, p. 38. Tarbes, 1868.

It was at this time that, being afraid of forgetting this expression which was so unfamiliar to her, and yet wishing to carry it faithfully to the parish priest of Lourdes, she repeated it over and over again to herself as she went. But she repeated it all wrong.[1]

The afternoon of the same day she went to see M. Estrade, to whom she related the events of the morning.

"When she had finished speaking," says M. Estrade, "my sister corrected the word 'Conception' which she had so distorted. The child turned to my sister, and with embarrassed air asked:

"But, Mademoiselle, what do the words mean, '*I am the Immaculate Conception*'?"[2]

These words were, as we have already said, as the divine echo of the papal definition of 1854. Thus the little Soubirous girl discovered, without knowing it, a new weapon for contemporary apologetics. She had discovered, or rather she had seen, a new type of Madonna, and a type as beautiful, if not more beautiful, than the most famous Virgins of the Renaissance artists.

The good child had never seen, either at Lourdes or at Bartrès, the only places in the world that she knew, any statue which in the least resembled the vision that she described. Every detail was revealed to her, and if this be not admitted, it must be at least admitted that she created everything herself, a fact which would be contrary to every scientific observation of hallucination.

I maintain that Bernadette's Madonna was as remarkable for beauty as for novelty. It must not

[1] She pronounced it Concheption, or in her patois, *coun-ched-siou.*

[2] Work quoted above, p. 149.

be judged entirely from the marble statue which the sculptor Fabisch executed according to her description, and which is to be seen in the niche of the Grotto above the wild rose.[1]

Either because of the impossibility for any artist to attain an ideal, even his own, as M. Fabisch remarked, or because of the incapacity of the poor child to find adequate words of description in her plebeian language, the marble was not the faithful portrait of the vision which she had always kept before her mind. When she saw it she cried out:

"It is beautiful, but it is not she. Oh no, the difference is as great as between heaven and earth!"

But what her words could not express, her voice and manner, whenever she spoke about it, conveyed more perfectly. It was charming to see her, as M. Fabisch tells us.

"I never saw anything so beautiful," he wrote to his family, "as when I asked her how Our Lady looked when she said, '*I am the Immaculate Conception.*' She rose with great simplicity, joined her hands, and raised her eyes to heaven. Neither Fra Angelico, nor Perugini, nor Raphael, has ever produced anything so sweet and at the same time so deep as the look of this simple young girl."

It was not by mere chance either; it was really the image of the heavenly reality of which she carried the exact and charming souvenir in her heart. For later the sculptor wrote:—

[1] This statue was presented by the Misses de Lacour of Lyons. It cost 7000 francs. M. Fabisch, who was entrusted with its execution, was Professor of Sculpture at the School of Art in Lyons. He had already made the statue which is on the spire of N. D. de Fourvière. The statue of N. D. de Lourdes was solemnly inaugurated on April 4, 1860. It is made of Carrara marble.

"As long as I live I shall never forget her charming expression. I have often seen in Italy and elsewhere the masterpieces of great men, of those who have excelled in the portrayal of divine love and ecstasy; in none have I found so much sweetness and charm. Each time I have asked Bernadette for this pose, the same expression has changed, illuminated, and transfigured her."

Another time M. Fabisch said: "Bernadette again showed me how the Blessed Virgin looked when she said, '*I am the Immaculate Conception.*' It is enough to make one cry."

We can defy all the doctors in all the hospitals in the world, who have most used and abused hallucinatory experiments, to indicate any artistic *chef-d'œuvre* reproduced by the most marvellous of their subjects from the simple remembrance of what had happened during an attack.

There is thus a vast difference between hallucination and Bernadette's visions. This is still better seen in comparing the after effects of the manifestations of either state.

After the Vision

Consider the character of a delusionary; she is bad-tempered, irritable, obstinate, proud, selfish, and without family affection. In short, hallucination is an evil weed which lowers and weakens moral life.

This is certainly not what happened with Bernadette. She remained a gentle and obedient child. After the first apparition her mother forbade her to return to Massabieille: the prohibition hurt her, but she obeyed. If she returned three days after, it was because she had asked and obtained permission.

Among her companions none was more lively or more modest. It was a veritable penance for her to be obliged to describe to visitors who pressed around her the heavenly spectacle she had witnessed.

Instead of dwelling sadly on morose and peculiar ideas, this delicate and frail creature seemed to pass through the world like a bird of passage gaily carolling in its flight through the air. She always preserved her childish gaiety. Her visions, far from injuring her moral state, helped her so much that she easily mounted beyond the ordinary life to the serene heights of the cloister.

Hallucination lowers and degrades its victims; Bernadette's visions raised and ennobled her.

. . . . . .

And this double effect, this contrary effect, may be observed both in the mind and in the character of the subject, for it penetrates to its very depths. Let us take, for instance, in order to enhance the value of the comparison, a girl who is subject to hallucinations. Make her speak about her dreams. She will quickly show that her brain is disordered. What she says or writes is a tissue of quotations and predictions without any logical connection. The phrases are incomprehensible, the sentences incomplete, the words unfinished, and the whole spells incoherency.

But with Bernadette the effect is just the opposite. After the apparitions her mind remained perfectly healthy and balanced. Still more, nature had endowed her with a very mediocre intelligence, but on the subject of Massabieille she was always full of vivacity and common sense. The phenomenon is certainly very strange, but it is impossible to deny it, for it has been expressly stated by those who knew her.

"When any one spoke to her about the Grotto and the events connected with it," says M. Estrade, "she was no longer the same; she replied with a charm and a pointedness that fascinated those who were questioning her."[1]

M. Estrade quotes several examples of this fact.

Thus, while delusionaries rave especially about the object of their hallucinations, Bernadette was particularly clear and reasonable about what she had seen. Surely one cannot expect a greater contrast.

. . . . . .

Then again, this mental derangement which takes place after hallucination always goes on increasing and generally ends in madness. Dr. Voisin, of the Salpétrière, has formally declared this to be the case. He assures us that a child could not undergo what he terms the hallucinations of Bernadette without the brain giving way. And he boldly concludes that Bernadette must necessarily have become mad. He adds, what is more serious, that she really did become mad, and that it was necessary to shut her up in a convent.

This statement contains a medical principle and an historical fact. As regards the principle, Dr. Voisin was better informed than any one; as to the fact, he overshot the mark and was grievously mistaken. This he was made well aware of, for the Bishop of Nevers, in whose diocese Bernadette then was, defied him to prove his assertion, and proposed that he should personally question the person he calumniated. But Dr. Voisin, recognising his error, was careful not to accept.

Consulted by one of his brother doctors on the

[1] *Les Apparitions de Lourdes*, p. 280.

subject of the learned professor's statement, Dr. Robert Saint-Cyr, president of doctors at Nevers, extolled the common sense and goodness of Bernadette (then Sister Marie-Bernard), whose doctor he was, and he added: "You see, my dear fellow, that this young sister is far from being out of her mind. I say more, her calm, simple, and sweet nature would quite prevent such a thing from happening."[1]

But Dr. Voisin's evidence, though faulty, is very precious. For it proves that, according to this eminent alienist, Bernadette must inevitably have gone mad if her visions had been hallucinations. But Bernadette did not go mad. On the contrary, her mind remained perfectly well balanced, and even became more developed.

We must therefore conclude that her visions were not hallucinations.

Finally, to complete a comparison, which should rather be called a contrast, let us remark that Bernadette's visions were accompanied by material and tangible results which prove their supernatural reality. Nothing of the kind happens in the case of hallucination.

We recall, first of all, the discovery of the spring during one of the apparitions. Bernadette could not have known, and no one knew, that a spring existed in the Grotto. There was absolutely no trace of it. As soon as the critics at Lourdes heard mention of a spring they immediately became triumphant. This was quite sufficient evidence to prove that Bernadette was mad. No one had ever heard of the existence of such a spring.

[1] See Appendix, Note II., p. 290; also p. 362, Fr. ed.

However, Bernadette saw the sign made her by the apparition to go to the left of the Grotto. Not finding a single drop of water, for the ground was quite dry, she scooped out the earth with her fingers. The water began to well up slowly at first, then quickly increase in volume, and in a few days was the celebrated spring which we admire.[1]

These facts are incontestable; they were witnessed by thousands, and are definitely reported in local papers antagonistic to the visions.

Well, show us, then, a delusionary who ever accomplished the like. Hallucination lessens the mental powers instead of increasing them until they become capable of miraculous insight. The spring is a sign of the reality of the apparition, given to the spectators and to the world.

There exists yet another sign. The first affected the mind of the visionary, the second her pure body. It happened on April 7, 1858, at the seventeenth apparition, when Dr. Dozous was present. He himself has related the scene.

"Bernadette was on her knees, fervently reciting her prayers. Her rosary was in her left hand, and in her right she held a blessed candle which was alight. Just as she was beginning to ascend, on her knees as usual, she suddenly stopped, and placed the lighted candle under the finger of her left hand. The fingers were sufficiently apart to allow the flame to pass through. A strong draught made the flame burn more brightly, but I could not see any sign of burning on the skin.

"Astonished at this strange occurrence, I prevented any one from stopping her, and, taking my

[1] See *supra*, ch. i. p. 17.

watch, I observed her in this position for a quarter of an hour. Her prayers finished, and the transfiguration of her face having ceased, Bernadette rose, and was about to leave the Grotto. I retained her a moment, and asked her to show me her left hand, which I examined most carefully. There was not the slightest trace of a burn. I then begged the person who had taken the candle to relight it, and to give it to me. I placed it several times under Bernadette's left hand; she quickly moved it away, saying, 'You are burning me.' I relate this fact as I saw it, as many people who were close to Bernadette also saw it. I relate it as it happened, without explaining it."

It is impossible to explain without admitting supernatural intervention. We may add that it happened several times. Estrade saw it happen towards the end of February. The fingers of the visionary were resting on the flame of the candle. At the sight of this, all those present seemed to become dazed, and Mlle. Estrade could not help calling out: "But take the candle away; you see the child is burning herself."[1]

But she was not burning herself, and here is the wonder. We must make ourselves understood. We do not say that Bernadette did not feel the flame; we say that the flame did not burn her. A nervous state may cause insensibility, but it could not prevent fire from consuming the flesh with which it comes into contact. Of all the experiments made with neurotics—and there have been many—no one has ever come across a similar occurrence. It is the law of nature that the skin tissues and bones are

[1] Estrade, *Les Apparitions*, p. 152.

destroyed by the power of the flames which attack them, whether insensibility exists or not. A corpse is insensible, but it cannot resist the action of the flame which reduces it to ashes.

Once more, where is the delusionary who can put his hand over a strong flame and keep it there for fifteen minutes without being burnt? To these tangible effects, which are above Nature's laws, may be added innumerable miraculous cures which have proved the divine character of the visions at Lourdes. We will return to this unique evidence later and more fully.

Necessary Conclusions

We have proved that Bernadette's good faith was incontestable. It was never, to tell the truth, very much contested. We have also shown that the little visionary was not the dupe of an over-excited imagination. After what we have heard and discussed, it is not to be wondered at that all who were witnesses of the events, or who studied them at all closely, had eventually to recognise their supernatural reality. No enemy has ever been able to see this little girl in ecstasy without his scepticism being overcome.

The educated people of Lourdes were divided into two camps. But, as a contemporary has remarked, none of those who attacked the events of Massabieille ever went to see them, and all those who did see them admitted their miraculous character. Among the latter may be quoted M. de la Fitte, an old commissionary of stores; M. Germain, formerly veterinary surgeon in the army; M. Dufo,

lawyer; M. Lannes, tobacco manufacturer; the captain of the garrison; M. Pougat, president of the court, and many others.

Why should we not recall the story of the rustic guardian of the peace, Callet? It is an example of what many of the most violent adversaries of the Grotto really thought in their heart of hearts.

Callet was entrusted with the charge of preventing visitors from entering the Grotto, which was barricaded round. The man executed his commission faithfully, and summoned several people for trespassing. But, as he has since admitted, he took good care to arrive very early so as to be able to perform his own private devotions inside the enclosure before any one else arrived.

M. Dozous, one of the doctors of the town and a sceptic, studied the apparitions, and was convinced of their reality. Later he wrote a little book on the subject, with the epigraph, "I believe because I saw—*Credidi quia vidi.*"

A gentleman whom we have several times had occasion to mention, M. Estrade, also declared in his own book: "I also had to lay down my arms, and if I write these lines in my old age, it is in recognition of the grace which I received on the thrice happy day of my defeat."

All the earlier opponents—I do not know of a single exception—gave way in time, to the evidence of their own eyes, and all who had anything to do with the events at Massabieille died faithful believers of the Church. Even Dr. Balencie of Lourdes, the most influential member of the commission appointed by the prefect, and the one who drew up the report about the hallucinations of the young

visionary, had to yield to the irresistible eloquence of the facts, and for twenty years he signed the certificates of the miraculous cures worked by the celestial apparition he had so long denied.

The official of the municipality whom we mentioned just now, Callet, loved to recall later that "all those who were lacking in respect to the Blessed Virgin were punished," and he would quote the story, which caused a sensation at the time, of a local disbeliever who was converted, and ever afterwards went daily to the Grotto, rosary in hand.

"How many times," relates another witness, "when visiting Lourdes, have I not seen this man, his eyes lowered, the picture of humility and of true penitence!"[1]

We have seen how M. Dutour, the imperial procurator, had tried to stop the manifestations at the Grotto by sending for Bernadette. Later he recognised his error. Towards the end of his life he said to one of the most ancient champions of the visions:

"We were fighting for the honour of religion, and, humanly speaking, we should have won. If we failed—and I do not hesitate to admit it—it was because Our Lady was on your side and against us."[2]

His substitute, M. de L——, made a still more open avowal. Falling ill, he sent for M. le Curé Peyramale, and made his confession. When the priest returned with the Holy Viaticum, M. de L—— half rose in his bed, and made aloud the following courageous statement:

"Monsieur le Curé, I have to make a confession,

[1] Cros, work quoted, p. 170.

[2] Estrade, work quoted, p. 176.

and I am not sorry, for my own humiliation, that this confession should be heard by all here present. Although quite convinced of the reality of the Virgin's apparitions at Massabieille—and I had my reasons for being convinced—I have not had the courage to admit my belief."

The prefect, M. Massy, the mayor, M. Lacade, the superintendent of the police, M. Jacomet—that is to say, the officials who, with M. Dutour, were the declared enemies of the events at Massabieille—all likewise yielded to the gentle influence of grace, and died kissing the crucifix.

We may give as another instance, Dr. Diday of Lyons, who enjoyed a wide reputation for his talent, his railing scepticism, and his keen wit. He wrote a little book expressly to try to prove that Bernadette was nothing but a delusionary, and that the miraculous cures effected at the Grotto could all be explained naturally, although he admitted that it was sometimes difficult.

Happily for this determined opponent, he had studied the facts too closely, and with too great intelligence, not to be deeply touched by their supernatural character. During the latter part of his life he was to be seen at Lourdes openly telling his beads, and he died calling on the Immaculate Virgin whom he had ridiculed and who had forgiven him.[1]

Such acts of faith on the part of such competent men make a happy contrast to the denials of certain others—for the most part ignorant men, or men who, if educated, never closely studied the subject which they so rashly condemned.

On the occasion of one of the apparitions, the

[1] See the *Annales of N. D. de Lourdes,* April 30, 1902.

head of the police at Lourdes, who had been sent to maintain order, could not, it seems, overcome "the scientific indignation caused in his philosophical soul" by the spectacle of the vast crowds around the Grotto. He cast a glance of pity around, and, with his arms folded, he exclaimed in disgust: "To think that in the nineteenth century such superstition, such madness, should exist!"

He would, doubtless, have continued to orate, but the attitude of his hearers put a stop to his flood of eloquence. The good man seriously regarded himself as the representative of the century's science, and believed he had the right to speak in the name of science. Many others brought the same ridicule on themselves, and they were not policemen either!

Much preferable, and more honest, is the remark made by a blunt soldier of the garrison who had just seen Bernadette in ecstasy. He turned to one of his comrades, and said very loudly, in a somewhat excited way, which accounts perhaps for the coarseness of his language:

"And they want to make us believe, you and me, that the apparition is a fraud. In the name of all that's . . .! Let all the jolly fellows of the mess come to me, I'll tackle them."

There was more real wisdom in this plebeian outburst, perhaps, than in all the philosophical humbug of the good policeman, and of many of his imitators.

CHAPTER III

THE APPARITIONS AND THE CHURCH

Lourdes and the ecclesiastical hierarchy—The clergy of Lourdes—Mgr. Laurence and the episcopal commission—The Sovereign Pontiffs—Lourdes and the contemporary religious movement — Great religious events at Lourdes — The world's pilgrimage—Happy influence—Pilgrimages and the human heart—A school of religion, charity, and faith.

We may now ask, what reception did the Church give to the poor, humble, and ignorant child, the instrument used by God to make His supernatural revelations at Massabieille?

The Church waited.

M. l'Abbé Peyramale, the parish priest at Lourdes, was not the man to let himself be easily shaken or led. His was a straightforward, energetic, and imperious soul, with frank outbursts of bluntness. He would quickly put down any signs of indiscretion.

The first time he heard of the apparitions he shrugged his shoulders. It was a mere childish whim. But the visions continued; numerous witnesses, quite worthy of belief, came every day and spoke to him about them. He ended by listening to them, but did not commit himself to any answer when they questioned him.

One day at length he called his brother priests together, and spoke to them somewhat as follows: "You are aware, gentlemen, of the rumours which

are circulating with regard to certain apparitions supposed to take place in a grotto near the Gave. I ignore how far these reports are true or false, but what matters to us priests, in occurrences of this kind, is to hold ourselves in the greatest reserve. If the apparitions are true, and of heavenly origin, God will know how to call on us when the time comes; if they are illusions, or caused by the spirit of lies, God does not need our interference to unmask their falseness."[1]

Thereupon he recommended them to abstain altogether from going to Massabieille. Having taken this measure, he awaited the development of events in silence.

One day he was saying his breviary in the garden, when he saw a very timid and embarrassed little girl coming to him. He asked her bluntly, as was his wont, who she was and what she wanted.

"I am Bernadette Soubirous," said the little visitor quietly.

M. Peyramale did not know Bernadette, but, on hearing her name, he said roughly:

"Oh, it's you, is it? I have heard some very funny tales about you, my poor child. Come inside with me."

The curé was very tall, and looked severe and imposing. Bernadette once said of him: "Although he is very good, I fear him more than a policeman."

They reached the inner room, and, without offering the girl a seat, the priest turned and said severely:

"Well, and what do you want?"

The child blushed. It required all the courage

[1] Estrade, *Les Apparitions*, pp. 111, 112.

of her mission not to keep silence. Triumphing over her natural timidity, she said:

"The Lady of the Grotto told me to tell the priests that she wished to have a chapel at Massabieille, and that is why I have come."

"Who is this Lady of the Grotto?"

"She is a very beautiful lady, who appears on the rock at Massabieille."

"Yes, but who is this Lady? Does she come from Lourdes? Do you know her?"

"She does not come from Lourdes, and I do not know her."

"And you accept commissions from a person you do not know—such commissions as this?"

"Oh, Monsieur le Curé, the Lady who sends me is not like other ladies."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that she is as beautiful as a heavenly being, I think."

"And you have never asked this Lady her name?"

"Yes, indeed, but when I ask her, she bows her head, smiles, and does not reply."

"Is she dumb then?"

"If she were dumb, she could not have told me to come to you."

"Well, well, tell me, how did you come across her?"[1]

In spite of himself, M. Peyramale began to feel, as did all those who spoke with Bernadette, the penetrating charm of this simple little soul, as limpid as the mountain lakes—those blue lakes where the azure heavens are reflected.

He made the child a sign to sit down, and

[1] Estrade, *Les Apparitions*, p. 115.

listened to her story with interest. When she had finished he dissimulated his impressions, and told her gravely that she should not take this Lady seriously, with her singular commissions, and that she herself was doubtless the victim of an illusion.

There was a moment's silence. M. Peyramale rose, and walked up and down the room. At last he came to a standstill in front of Bernadette, and said:

"At any rate, you will tell the Lady who sent you, that the curé of Lourdes is not accustomed to treat with people he does not know. First, she must say what is her name, and then prove that this name belongs to her. If this Lady has any right to a chapel, she will understand my words; if she does not understand them, you can tell her that she need not send any more messages to the curé."

This took place on February 27th, after the eleventh apparition.

. . . . . .

On March 2nd, Bernadette knocked at the presbytery door once more. She came to tell the curé that the Lady had told her to repeat to him that she wished to have a chapel at Massabieille, and she had added: "I wish them to come in procession."

For the moment M. Peyramale could not contain himself—organise a procession to the Massabieille on his own authority!

"That just proves," he exclaimed, "that your Lady is an ignoramus: she is not acquainted with the functions of the hierarchy."

"But, Monsieur le Curé," replied Bernadette timidly, "she did not say that the procession was to take place at once. I even understood her to speak of the future."

The reply was so opportune, so just, that the curé became distrustful. He asked himself if this were not some sharp and intelligent little intriguer who knew how to play her part to perfection. The child looked at him with her naïve and calm air. Putting a sudden end to the interview, he said to her:

"It is time to put a stop to this plotting in which you and your Lady are trying to embroil me. You can tell her that the curé of Lourdes likes plain speaking.

"Who is she? Let her show herself! You pretend that she appears over a rose-tree. Well, then, ask her from me that one of these days during February she make the rose-bush flower suddenly in front of the assembled crowd. Then I will believe you, and will go with you to Massabieille."

The excellent pastor forgot that God does not allow Himself to be bound down by conditions. He works miracles when and how He wills. He will not be ordered even by the well-intentioned. He does not expect to be treated like a servant.

Mgr. Laurence and the Episcopal Commission

It was in vain that M. Peyramale discouraged Bernadette, and shut himself up within the limits of a prudent and silent reserve; he began to be extraordinarily touched by the events which continued to happen, and by the evidence which reached him from all sides. He resolved therefore to go to his Bishop, and ask his advice.

Mgr. Laurence listened, but without any desire to move in the matter. Or, rather, yielding to a

prudent impulse, he began by not believing. The apparition must furnish proofs of identity. He allowed that a commission should be appointed to inquire into the matter officially. This was what the public demanded, but he judged that popular emotion was still too great to allow the inquirers to accomplish their duty calmly.

"We believed at first," he wrote a little later, "that it was not yet time to go into this business; that to judge as we should do, it was necessary to proceed slowly, to mistrust the first excitement, to calm minds, to give time for reflection and to obtain enlightenment by attentive observation."[1]

Mgr. Laurence then took time for his helper, according to a method familiar in the Church, which can afford to wait.

"Time is a great master," said the ancients. "It brings everything to light."

And at Lourdes time did its usual work. The reality of the apparitions became more and more an established fact. Miraculous events confirmed what had merely been public opinion. In short, the time came when it seemed opportune to investigate the extraordinary story, and, at the end of July 1858, Mgr. Laurence solemnly appointed a commission of inquiry composed of sixteen members, who were entrusted with the work.

This commission also took its time. Three months were allowed to pass by without its instituting an inquiry, and when once the initial steps were taken, work was done with such calm deliberation that the first episcopal report was only published four years after the first apparition.

[1] Ordinance of July 28, 1858.

At the same time the commission took every possible step to discover the real truth. They were able to proceed with perfect impartiality, for it made no difference to religion whether the apparitions were true or not. Moreover, the Bishop advised them that the "commission was to neglect no possible means of reaching the truth, whatever it might be."

The commission questioned Bernadette, who replied on oath. They went to the Grotto, and tried to find out how the famous reflection could have been possible, as explained by the three doctors who had drawn up a report for Prefect Massy, and who had to devise some makeshift to suit their ends. Bernadette was present, and had to go through the various scenes of the apparitions.

Besides, a great number of witnesses were cross-examined, especially as to the existence of the spring on the day before it had welled up under the visionary's hands. All agreed on two points: the spring was invisible when Bernadette saw it, and Bernadette could never have discovered it except by an inspiration from heaven. The miraculous cures which had taken place were subjected to the most rigorous examination. When necessary, the members of the commission went all over the country to procure information. Inquiries were made as to the morality of those interested, their pathological precedents, and all the circumstances of their cure. The doctors who had had the care of the cases were present when the cross-examination took place, and any case which could have been cured by natural means was immediately rejected.

The commission also procured the services of

an eminent physician, Dr. Vergez, inspector of the waters at Barèges and a fellow of the Faculty of Montpellier. Every report was inspected by this famous man. So novel a study surprised the learned doctor, and touched him deeply. Never, in his career, had he come across anything similar. In sifting the evidence, he made the following classifications :—

1. Cases unmistakably possessing a supernatural character.
2. Cases *probably* miraculous, or doubtful.
3. Cases which might be explained scientifically.

The first class only were minutely investigated, the others were put on one side. Also, only those which occurred during the year 1858 were dealt with, and of these only the principal.

Of these selected marvellous events, the celebrated professor wrote as follows :—

"In casting a glance over the preceding eight cures,[1] one is chiefly struck by the facility, the promptitude, the spontaneity with which they are brought about: by the violation and disregard of every therapeutic method in their accomplishment; by their contrast to the rules and previsions of science; by their contempt for the duration, resistance, and gravity of the disease; by the care with which all the circumstances are arranged and connected, to prove that the cure effected is above Nature's laws.

"Such phenomena surpass human understanding. How comprehend, otherwise, the opposition which

[1] Dr. Vergez proposed to base the decision on eight facts which seemed to be absolutely and incontestably supernatural. The episcopal authority prudently would accept only seven.

exists between the unity of the remedy, and the diversity of diseases; the short duration of the application of the curative agent, and the length of the treatments within the power of science and art; between the efficacy of the first and the inutility of the second; between the chronicity of the disease and the instantaneousness of the cure.

"There certainly exists a contingent force, superior to nature, and not due to the water which it uses merely as a means to manifest its power." [1]

"If I am asked what I saw at Lourdes," the eminent professor added before he died, "I can reply: 'In the examination of most authentic facts, placed above all power of science and art, I have seen, I have touched, the divine work of miracles.'"

This was the spirit of the report which the commission at length gave in to Mgr. Laurence, after so much prudent waiting, and, on January 18, 1862, appeared the decision of the Bishop of Tarbes with regard to the apparitions. The text of this decision runs as follows:—

"We declare that the Immaculate Mary, Mother of God, really appeared to Bernadette Soubirous on February 11th, 1858, and on following days, as often as eighteen times, in the Grotto of Massabieille, near the town of Lourdes; that these apparitions have all the characteristics of truth, and that the faithful are justified in believing them to be true. We humbly submit our decision to the judgment of the Sovereign Pontiff, who governs the Universal Church." [2]

[1] Manuscript Report of the Commission of Inquiry in the archives of the Grotto at Lourdes.

[2] See Appendix, Note 3, p. 364, Fr. ed.

The Sovereign Pontiffs

The doctrinal authority of the Pope has not intervened to rectify the decision of the Bishop of Tarbes.

But if they have published no definition on this subject, the different Popes who have succeeded one another since the first happenings at Lourdes, have openly expressed their personal opinions on the matter.

Since 1869, seven years since the pastoral of Mgr. Laurence, Pius IX. has been pleased to proclaim the "striking evidence of the facts."[1] Some years later, on receipt of a Lourdes souvenir from the Bishop of Tarbes, he said:

"I shall place this picture in my oratory, where I go several times every day to pray before the Blessed Sacrament; and if my soul is desolate, if God seems not to hear us, I shall raise my eyes to the Immaculate; she will pray with us, she will pray for us."

Doubtless Pius IX. remembered Pius V. and the battle of Lepanto, when the intervention of the Blessed Virgin saved Christianity from the sanguinary barbarities of the Mussulmans. A little Lourdes Grotto was constructed in the Vatican Gardens, where the miraculous water supplied from Lourdes flowed as at Lourdes. During his daily promenade Pius IX. was accustomed to make a pilgrimage to this favourite spot. He distributed the water among the sick, and used it himself for the infirmities of old age.

. . . . . .

[1] Brief of September 4, 1869.

Leo XIII. inherited his predecessor's devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. At the latter end of his life he wrote: "It is nearly fifty years since the Holy Virgin Mother of God manifested, at Lourdes, in the most striking manner, the power of her help and the tenderness of her maternal heart in favour of the needy and unhappy."[1]

He often thought of the Massabieille rocks, and from afar invoked her who deigned to shower down the ineffable sweetness of her mercy.

"Have you been to Lourdes?" he one day asked an Italian Cardinal.

"Most Holy Father," replied the Cardinal, "I have only been there in spirit."

"Oh, in spirit," returned the Pope. "So have we all, and often go still."

When the Church of the Rosary was to be blessed in 1889, Leo XIII. delegated Cardinal Richard, Archbishop of Paris, to perform the ceremony in his name, and later, in 1901, on the occasion of the final consecration, another Cardinal, the Archbishop of Reims, was charged to represent him at this festival.

A few years previously, on his Pontifical Jubilee, the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception had offered him a silver statue of Our Lady of Lourdes.

"Ah," said Leo XIII. when he received it, "you could not have given me anything

[1] Letter to the Bishop of Liège, February 11, 1899. It is also worthy of note that Leo XIII. granted an Office and a Mass proper to the Apparitions.

The present Pope has been pleased to make the Feast of the Apparition on February 11th a feast of the Universal Church.

I liked better." And raising the statue, he kissed it.

A month later the Bishop of Clermont saw the statue in the study of the Holy Father, who said to him: "I put it here so as to be able to invoke her whom it represents, at any time in the midst of my cares as Sovereign Pontiff."

And when Mgr. Schoepfer, the Bishop of Tarbes, suggested the construction in the Vatican Gardens of a Grotto which should be exactly like that at Lourdes, he hailed the idea with evident pleasure. He was then already in the habit of visiting daily the simple stone erection which Pius IX. had placed there. He said one day to the Cardinal who accompanied him: "What do you think? It is my little corner of France."

This "little corner of France" was enlarged and embellished by Pius X. There, in the midst of the Vatican Gardens, one might imagine one's self at Lourdes again, "that spot which has been made famous by the admirable apparitions of the Immaculate Virgin."[1]

This corner of France is also a corner of heaven.

Lourdes, and the Contemporary Religious Movement

As soon as the Church authorised the cult of the Virgin on the Massabieille rocks, these became famous and were frequented by people from all parts of France. Excepting the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, erected by "a repentant and devoted faith" on the

[1] Letters of the Pope to Mgr. Schoepfer, Bishop of Tarbes, September 14, 1903.

heights of Montmartre, all the great religious movements in France during the last half-century have taken place at Lourdes. Following in the footsteps of a simple child, the nation hastened to the banks of the Gave to pay her homage and chant her *Ave Marias.*

There are to be seen all classes of society; adults and children, poor and rich, ignorant and learned, without distinction of birth, fortune, or talent. Faithful France moves in an immense procession towards the country of the radiant apparition.

"M. le Curé," said Bernadette to M. Peyramale, "the Lady said, 'I wish people to come here in procession.'"

And M. Peyramale, as we have seen, was much upset at the audacity of such a message. But the incredible has been realised. They have come, and are still coming, in endless processions, such as were never seen before in our country.

The Basilica was scarcely finished, and the disastrous war of 1870 hardly over, when a delegation from all parts of France came to request the Virgin of Massabieille for the courage necessary to bear the national woes. At the same time each of the French confraternities which particularly honoured the name of Mary, deposited a banner in the new temple as a token of their homage.

When the Alsatian banner with its crape tassels passed by, the prelate who presided over the ceremony took hold of one of its corners and lowered it in silence. The great wound inflicted by the late war was still gaping and bleeding; at the prelate's action a patriotic thrill passed through the crowd,

and tears filled every eye.[1] These flags are to be seen nowadays hanging from the arches of the Basilica.

Four years later, in 1876, the Basilica was consecrated, and the statue of Our Lady of Lourdes solemnly crowned. At this imposing ceremony there were present thirty-five Bishops, one Cardinal, three thousand priests, and a hundred thousand faithful. One has to seek long through the pages of the world's history to find a similar display of enthusiasm.

In 1883 the twenty-fifth anniversary of the apparition was celebrated, and the first stone of the Church of the Holy Rosary laid. And six years later the same church was solemnly opened. It was consecrated in 1901, with splendid ceremony. Twenty-five prelates, two cardinals, and a patriarch were among those present.

Besides the national pilgrimages commenced in 1873, at the end of the nineteenth century pilgrimages were started which were composed exclusively of men. In three of these were thirty, fifty-five, and sixty thousand men respectively.

Sixty thousand men! A veritable army! There has been nothing like it since the Crusades.

The World's Pilgrimage

Such are the special dates which mark the history of Lourdes during the last half-century. They are glorious dates. But still more importance must be attached to the immense crowds who come regularly every year to pay the enthusiastic homage

[1] October 1872.

of their faith. From 1867 to 1903 inclusively, 4271 pilgrimages wended their way to Lourdes, bearing in their train 387,000 pilgrims.

Naturally the first few years furnish the more modest portions of this astounding figure. The last seven years of the series give an annual average of 150 pilgrimages. In seven years 1637 trains carried 1,074,000 pilgrims to Lourdes.[1]

But this is only a small fraction of the vast multitude who annually visit the hallowed sanctuary. The single pilgrims are much more numerous than those who arrive in groups. Besides, there are visitors, not exactly pilgrims, who have been led to visit the little town by religious sentiment or perhaps even by a simple desire to see so celebrated a spot.

The Southern Railway Company reckon that Lourdes station alone receives over a million travellers every year, which makes it one of the most important stations on the line.[2]

This little Pyrenean corner, formerly hidden and forgotten among its mountains, has thus become an important town whither people flock from all parts of the globe. Among the 4271 pilgrimages just mentioned, 292 came from abroad—from Belgium, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Spain, Portugal, Italy, England, Ireland, the United States, Canada, Brazil, Bolivia, &c.

The Bishops set the example. From 1868 to September 1904, 1643 visited Lourdes. Among them were 277 archbishops, 10 primates, 17 patriarchs, and 63 cardinals. Of these 757 were

[1] See Appendix, Note 4, p. 372, Fr. ed.

[2] See Appendix, Note 5, p. 373, Fr. ed.

from abroad. They represent every country in the world:—Australia, New Zealand, New Caledonia, India (which sent 31), China (27), Brazil, Mexico, Armenia, Syria, Ceylon, Martinique, Zanzibar, Burma, Venezuela, Peru, Poland, Chili, Ecuador, New Scotland, Russia, and Norway — and other places.[1]

Meanwhile the cult of the Immaculate Virgin who appeared to Bernadette, spread beyond the borders of France to the uttermost bounds of the earth. Everywhere statues, grottoes, chapels, churches, and confraternities honour her blessed name. The cult of Our Lady of Lourdes has taken possession of the Catholic world.

But, it may be asked, how was Christianity benefited by the events at Lourdes?

We will try to answer this question.

Pilgrimages and the Human Heart

Some intellectuals object to the Lourdes pilgrimages on the score that they are similar to those of other religions, say in India or at Mecca. Their objection is an argument in our favour. It would certainly be very illogical to conclude from a similarity of manifestations of religious sentiment to a similarity of belief. Belief is one thing, and sentiment another. Mussulmans go in pilgrimage to Mecca, and twentieth century Christians go to Lourdes. Such is the fact.

If you say that, because the former are deceived in revering Mahomet, the latter are also deceived

[1] See Appendix, Note 6, p. 374, Fr. ed.

in revering the Immaculate Virgin, you follow a line of argument which cannot be logically maintained.

Such religious manifestations are based on nature itself. They form one of its laws, and are an absolute need to the human heart. This alone makes them worthy of respect. God governs mankind conformably to its moral constitution, and by the essential laws which result therefrom.

According to St. Paul, the supernatural is grafted on to the natural. It makes use of the natural sap, but renders it capable of producing new fruits worthy of heaven. God, then, acts according to natural causes, even in matters pertaining to salvation. And the laws of the human mind, its radical tendencies, its general needs, are a part of the causes. God keeps count of, and uses, them for His ends. Consequently we may believe that He grants special blessings to these great public manifestations, which are the spontaneous results of a nation's faith. We may believe also that He honours and sanctions certain places by extraordinary marks of a divine favour.

These chosen places are thus to religion what other places are to the country, venerable centres of eloquent souvenirs, where souls meet to vent their justifiable enthusiasm, their legitimate and profound aspirations. In acting thus God does but remain faithful to the ordinary laws of His rule over man and nature.

Besides satisfying tendencies of man's nature, these vast assemblages around certain sanctuaries produce moral effects; another reason why God authorises and allows them.

A School of Religion, Charity, and Faith

I know very well that these great religious reunions do not appeal to certain souls otherwise honest and straightforward. Their religion is affrighted by such lively demonstrations. They need a calm and contemplative method of prayer. An immense crowd brought together by a common enthusiasm is like the sea—impetuous, violent, stormy, tumultuous. This is not what certain sensitive and timid minds need.

But such minds are the exception. As a rule, these magnificent manifestations feed and animate religious hearts. They bring them fresh energy and decision.

The association of sentiments is like any other association. The very act of union awakens the consciousness of their existence and power, and self-confidence increases in proportion. The religious feeling is carried along in a kind of general movement, as experience proves. All who have taken part in the prayers of pious crowds know how their own prayer has become more ardent in consequence. It is more than the impression of a moment. There remains from these hours of burning faith and great enthusiasm an after-glow which lights up the whole life that follows. Home again, away from the noise and crowd, the effects are still felt, and the soul is enlightened, regenerated, and quickened.

From this point of view the Lourdes pilgrimages have exercised great influence on the religious movement of the last thirty or forty years. But it is not only the happy infection of a great piety that is felt in this land of miracles. There are sights not

to be seen elsewhere, and these are the most convincing of lessons.

. . . . . .

For example, have you ever come across such charity for the sick as is to be seen here?—such touching disinterestedness and devotion? The sick come to Lourdes from every corner of France. Nay, more, they come from every part of the world. To mention only those who are too poor to put up at an hotel, of whom there are at least four or five thousand every year. They are taken into the hospitals free of charge, and are waited on by young girls and ladies accustomed to be waited on themselves, and who are often the ornaments of society and the envied queens of its festivals.

Riches, elegance, and grace become the voluntary servants of poverty, and that of a poverty aggravated by sickness often repulsive and disgusting. Delicate hands replace the soiled bandages and wash wounds. These same hands undress the sick when they go to the piscina, and, in spite of the horrible sights of loathsome disease, they plunge them into the miraculous water with maternal carefulness and tenderness.

Very often the relations thus commenced between the poor invalid and the great lady continue long after the pilgrimage. Charity effaces the distances between those whom birth has placed at the two extremities of society.

This voluntary work is not performed without great fatigue. Very often the refined infirmarian has to be up at five in the morning, tending those whom she had left late the night before, and sometimes she must sit up with them all night. And if,

during this long watch, she is overcome with fatigue and manages to snatch an hour's sleep, there is not even a sofa for her to lie on. She may even have to be content with the stairway.

And yet these devoted infirmarians, these Sisters of Charity in all but the white wings, are innumerable. They come from the highest ranks of society in such numbers that there are not enough sick for them to nurse.

Let us pass on from this touching spectacle to another no less touching. Cast your eyes over the paths from the hospitals to the piscinas, to the Grotto or the Esplanade of the Rosary, whither the Blessed Sacrament is shortly to be carried.

Forsaking the pleasure which their fortune would allow, hundreds of young men, many of them distinguished by their rank and noble air, pass along with straps slung over their shoulders. Some carry stretchers with unfortunate sick people lying flat on their backs, others draw little carriages in which the sick sit up. They mind neither bad weather nor heat. Sometimes the incline is steep and the perspiration flows down their faces, but they go on their way cheerfully and without complaint.

"A good porter," says their *Manual* in simple and sublime language, "must be able to bear heat or cold, sun or rain, hunger or thirst, and long privations." And it gives almost maternal directions for the care of the poor sick folk who are about to pass out of their lives.

"He must know how to cross the brook with agility, remembering that he is more often than not carrying a poor infirm body whose sufferings are

increased by jolting; he must walk carefully over places where stones have been freshly laid. . . . He shall be thoughtful for the susceptibilities of the sick, who are nervous and impressionable in the midst of the crowd. . . .

"Whether he carries the invalid in his arms or on a chair with another porter, he shall be careful to be very gentle in his movements; he shall avoid shocks, and try to spare the invalid anything that could trouble or pain him."

In the work to be done at the piscinas the *Manual* recognises that a good heart is necessary. For "it is assuredly there that humanity is revealed under its most miserable aspect.

"One must know how to hear composedly distressing cries, see repulsive sores, smell unforgettable smells, undress, touch these poor bodies, strap them, and plunge them while praying into the miraculous water.

"The hospitalier must take the invalid in his arms (however repugnant he may be), put him on a chair gently, and take off his clothes without hurting him. . . . He must comfort him when dressing him again, and must be full of gentleness and kindness."

When the sick pilgrims arrive during the night, or at three o'clock in the morning, the "porter" should await them on the station platform, and be ready to begin his hard but loving service.

And once he has taken charge of them, he will often not have a moment left to himself. On some busy days, those who have been up before dawn have not had time to breakfast until three o'clock in the afternoon. And all this is done simply, without any show, as if it were a duty, which of course it is.

These voluntary workers form a select regiment; they accept their chiefs, and obey them like soldiers. They all, whether male or female, come to Lourdes at their own expense. One need not be a Christian to see the heroism of such devotion. Their disinterestedness and self-renunciation for the sake of the sick, whose diseases are often of a loathsome nature, is most touching. Perhaps there is no other place on earth where can be seen such a grand exhibition of virtue. Lourdes is the High School of practical charity.

. . . . . .

Certain vain boastings of sceptics are sometimes taken seriously by ignorant fellows who are afraid of not being in the fashion. A new pride, child of the progress of science, and especially of its applications, which have altered the face of the earth, has led men to deify Nature. They have tried to take it away from the power of the Creator, as if creation had exhausted or limited Him. According to them, God is but the powerless spectator of the universe; He is the slave of His own Laws, and not the master. They refuse Him the right to interfere in the order of the world.

"Defense à Dieu
De faire miracle en ce lieu."

These ideas were rampant among educated people when the events which made Lourdes famous took place.

By rejecting miracles incredulity was left with an easy method of attack on faith. The miraculous events which have for centuries been the satellites of Christianity were easily disposed of. They happened so long ago that it was easy to cast doubt upon them.

"If formerly the blind saw, the deaf heard, the lame walked, owing to divine and miraculous intervention, why have these wonders ceased? Has God's power been diminished?"

Thus argued the sceptics, and, instead of concluding that what had been might be again, they concluded that what was not had never been.

And behold everything is changed! The question is no longer about old miracles; but about the miracles of yesterday and to-day. It is impossible to stifle them under historical obscurity. The witnesses are alive and ready to be questioned. The heroes are living, and to be seen.

We are in the full light of the sun, and there is no means of avoiding it. Moreover, the marvellous events take place every year, by the hundred, as we are about to see. Thus chased from history, the miraculous re-enters triumphant and boldly confronts its enemies. Many turn their heads, and will not see. Such people are their own judges.

But others see and believe!

PART II

THE CURES

CHAPTER I

THE FACTS

The facts—Their recognised reality—How they are authenticated—Number and variety of cures—Some examples—Interpretation of facts—That neither nature nor the contact with water can explain the cures—Suggestion is not a sufficient explanation—A fashion—Contested facts—Suggestion and nervous disease—Suggestion and organic disease—Two different methods of cure—No suggestion at Lourdes—Theory of unknown forces—Miracles and doctors.

It is well known that the shrine at Lourdes has become the permanent scene of miraculous cures. This fact is only contested by shallow minds; all others are forced, *nolens volens*, to admit it.

It was not so at the beginning. Then educated people smiled at the strange tales which reached their ears from the banks of the Gave, and almost defiantly came into the very midst of a society which dared no longer pronounce the word *miracle*. Society only deplored the dreadful results of fraud or of too great simplicity.

Constant repetition of facts, however, forced the world to admit their existence, and this has been one of the greatest victories won by Lourdes. It is quite impossible henceforth to deny the extraordinary events which are taking place at Massabieille. Whatever may be thought of the supernatural, these events must be discussed.

A French professor of the Medical Faculty in Paris wrote some years ago to the *New York Herald* as follows: "It is the fashion to turn into ridicule everything that happens at the Grotto. Perhaps it is easier to scoff than to deny. Why not try to solve these problems, instead of dismissing them summarily?"

Nowadays this is just what is being done. In his *Treatise on Suggestion as applied to Therapeutics*, Bernheim, the famous head of the School at Nancy, wrote:—

"In making these observations on *authentic* cures which took place at Lourdes; in trying, in the name of Science, to deprive them of their miraculous character; in comparing from this point of view alone, religious suggestion with hypnotic suggestion, I have no intention of attacking religious faith or of wounding religious sentiment. All these observations have been made in all sincerity and controlled by honourable men. *The facts exist;* it is the interpretation which is erroneous."[1]

Let us put the last words on one side for the time being. We will come back to them later.

The learned Jew admits that the sick are really cured in crowds at the Grotto, and that the official accounts are authentic. I may add that this is also the opinion of all who personally investigate what goes on at Lourdes; of course those who only pass through the little town, whether as tourists or pilgrims, may be of another opinion. Lost in the crowd, they are ignorant of the loyal methods by which every case is registered, and thus may also ignore the presence of the miraculous.

[1] Quoted in *Etudes Religieuses*, vol. li. pp. 367, 368.

But it was quite otherwise for those who stay at the office of medical registration on the Rosary Esplanade. I myself did this before writing this work. I wished to see and judge for myself. During August and September 1904 I spent long hours and sometimes whole days at this office. There I met very many invalids who had just been cured. I heard the doctors cross-examine them, I saw the reports drawn up, and I formed my own opinions. It is impossible to doubt either the reality of the most unexpected cures, or the perfect sincerity of the doctors who investigate and authenticate them.

Besides, during the three days of the Great National Pilgrimage, there were present in the room many doctors of every shade of opinion. One of them, who edits an important journal of psychotherapeutics, made some very clear and important statements on the subject we are discussing. A friendly argument had arisen between him and one of the assistants, and the following conversation took place, and has been recorded:—

"First of all, doctor, do you admit that extraordinary and authentic cures do take place here?"

"Yes, certainly, I admit it."

"And that there is absolute sincerity on the part of those who verify these facts?"

"Certainly. I will even add that I expected to find at Lourdes a certain amount of stage-management which is absolutely lacking. Things are allowed to take their course. They are not manœuvred in the least. With regard to the reports on the diseases and cures, their truthfulness and impartiality are undeniable. It only remains to explain these facts, and it is there that we differ."

"Allow me, doctor, to note all you have said. There is here no fraud, no voluntary inaccuracy, no attempt at undue influence over the sick. You acknowledge this, do you not?"

At that moment there were present in the office, two or three priests, some journalists, five or six politicians, a member of the Austrian parliament, about twenty doctors, who were strangers and probably sceptics like the one who had spoken. None of them made the slightest protest as to the authenticity of the facts which had been publicly recognised; they admitted them with their learned colleague.

I can declare, moreover, that of the doctors I have met at this office, many of whom were fortunate enough to witness cures, I have never come across one who doubted the reality of these cures or the good faith of the authenticated records.[1]

The Verification of Facts

A crowd is always subject to dangerous enthusiasm which may easily lead it astray. The press is a little like the crowd, for it is a part of it. Besides, news must be published at once, which means that more often than not there is no time to verify facts before publication. The consequences are often disastrous. But there is no remedy, and what cannot be cured must be endured.

We cannot but recognise the evil effects of premature publication on certain antagonistic minds, but we must also admit that the interests of truth

[1] When Zola went to Lourdes in 1892, he also bore witness to the reality of the cures. He said to a reporter of the *Temps*, "I have seen people unable to move, suddenly *get up and walk*."

are often served by exciting public attention and inciting to contradiction and investigation. A kind of spontaneous public inquiry is held, in which the opponents of the miraculous cure have to take part. The news is carried to the country of the invalid, the cure is published in his own town or village, all are called to give evidence on his state before and after his cure, and to watch his further progress.

And the fair reputation of Lourdes is increased in consequence. For there is no need of mystery. Everything that happens at the Grotto is the better for being brought into the open daylight of public criticism. There may be some tares among the harvest of miracles which journalists offer the public, but the very fact of publication helps to sort the tares from the wheat. The danger is that the good grain may suffer from its surroundings. It is therefore unwise to rely on newspapers for authentic information as to what happened at Lourdes.

Newspapers give news, but news cannot take the place of authenticated records.

. . . . . .

I have spoken of the office of medical registration at Lourdes. It is here that all inquiries should be addressed.[1]

It certainly was a bold move to create, in full nineteenth century, a medical school for the study of miracles. For a long while the authorities at Lourdes were content with the publication of cures on the strength of a doctor's certificate or of evidence given by eye-witnesses. But it was found that sometimes the witnesses were incompetent and

[1] See also *Les grandes Guérisons de Lourdes*, by Dr. Boissarie (Paris).

lacked calm of mind. There was the possibility, too, that some unknown village doctors, not above suspicion, might perhaps bring science into disrepute. Then, again, the number of cures increased so rapidly that a new organisation became necessary.

Thus in 1882 a Medical Office was started. Its work is to verify the certificates which the invalids often bring with them to Lourdes. It examines the invalids personally, should they so desire. When a cure is announced—which very often happens during the large pilgrimages—it immediately takes charge of the case.

All doubtful or insignificant cases are thus at once put on one side, and there is no chance of the crowd getting hold of them and distorting or exaggerating facts. Every examination is open to any, whether friend or foe, who may desire to investigate matters closely. Doctors are especially welcome whatever their nationality or creed. Perhaps there is no clinical laboratory in France which is so easy of access and so frequented.

During the last fifteen years 2712 doctors, 461 of them foreigners, have visited the office of registration. Among this number were three members of the Academy of Medicine, twenty-six professors of the French Faculty, fourteen professors of foreign Faculties, eight from Medical Schools, forty-eight doctors and surgeons and seventy-two house surgeons. Their names are all inscribed on the register, and make an imposing, perhaps a unique, collection.[1]

During the last eight or ten years from 200 to 250 doctors have gone to Lourdes every year. There have been as many as sixty in the office together.

[1] See Appendix, Note 3, p. 290, and Note 7, p. 375, Fr. ed.

They were each and all at entire liberty to see and to question the invalids who come to give evidence as to their disease or cure. It may even happen that on very busy days the president of the office may say: "Will some doctor kindly take this case in hand either in a private room or in the hospital?" It does not matter what the reporting doctor's opinions are; his report is accepted by the official doctors of the Grotto.

Some years ago an English physician, Dr. Henry Head, stayed at Lourdes during the whole time of the great pilgrimages. He came, provided with every kind of apparatus for examining ears and eyes and for making sundry analyses, besides which he brought a camera. He was a Protestant, but he was allowed to do exactly as he liked. He assisted at the dis cussions with perfect liberty, took notes assiduously, and personally questioned the sick.

It is said that our hospitals are not so obliging. There is more mystery, and the same facilities are not given. The public would like to know why—for after all it is the public who pays the expenses, whilst at Lourdes the rates are not asked to help in any way. Yet the doors are open to all who are competent to make serious investigations. There is nothing hidden.

Thus Dr. Henry Head could see and talk as much as he liked. When he left he wrote Dr. Boissarie the following note:—

"Above all, I should like to thank the authorities at Lourdes, most sincerely and most cordially, for having granted to me and to other doctors every facility for free and independent examination. All we have asked for has been generously given us.

"I shall not fail to make known to all my friends

this hospitable welcome, and the courtesy with which I, a stranger, have been received.

"With regard to the medical examinations of the cures, I am happy to express my complete satisfaction as to the manner in which the certificates of the sick are dealt with. Nothing can exceed the conscientious care with which the value of each certificate is weighed."[1]

For, as we have seen, each invalid pilgrim brings with him a doctor's certificate. These certificates are very important, for they give the details of the patient's state, with notes as to his morality and antecedents.

Each patient also wears on his chest a number corresponding to his registration number at the office. It is thus easy to recognise him, look up his case, and write a report if necessary.

But the registration office does more. If the cured patient remains a few days longer at Lourdes, he has to report himself morning and evening to show that his cure has been a permanent one, and not the result of a passing emotion. If the case is an important one, the patient is kept in touch with when returned home. He is asked to return the following year, and perhaps for several years. Those who stay in the registration office can watch the long procession of former patients, who have come to show the permanence of their cure, and to thank their heavenly benefactress for the favours shown them.

Here is a little boy accompanied by his mother.

"How old are you?" asks Dr. Boissarie, who does not recognise him.

[1] Boissarie, *Lourdes* (Paris, 1894), pp. 254, 255.

"Eleven."

"And you have been ill? You do not look it."

"No, doctor," replies the mother, "he has not been ill."

"What is it, then?"

"We have come to say that he has been very well for the last few years—that is, since he was cured."

The records of 1900 are consulted. In that year the child, then aged seven, arrived at Lourdes suffering from a duly certified disease of the spinal cord; he had not been able to walk, but only crawl on his hands and knees, and he had left Lourdes on his feet like other people.

Four years passed; the cure was lasting, and he enjoyed perfect health, running about like any child of his own age. The disease from which he had suffered had entirely disappeared in 1900; the result was definite, and an additional note was added to this effect.

Later, a little girl of thirteen, who had been cured of being deaf and dumb, came to show that she could still talk and hear. I questioned her, and assured myself of the reality of her cure.

Here is a woman whose eyes have recovered their lost sight. And another woman whose face is still scarred—Mme. Rouchel from Metz. In 1903 she went to Lourdes with a horrible lupus; it was eating away her face and had made two holes, one through the cheek and the other through the palate. These two holes had been closed instantaneously, in the twinkling of an eye.

And here is the happy woman back again. The doctor places his finger where it had easily

passed through the flesh the year before. The wound is closed, as can be both felt and seen.[1]

I merely recall a few of these interesting cases as they occur to my mind, but I saw many others. For it is the custom among the pilgrims to return to Lourdes to give thanks for their cure, and to bring the proof that the cure has been durable. One could hardly use a better or surer method.

The unhappy women declared to have been cured by psychotherapic methods are not followed with such vigilance. Do they ever return to authenticate the definite nature of their cure ?

No ; there is no means of knowing if the results obtained have been lasting or not. Nowhere is there such a keen regard for truth as at Lourdes.

What, then, are the facts so scrupulously and so methodically authenticated ? Are they numerous and what is their nature ?

Number and Variety of Cures

Here the history of Lourdes is unique. The marvellous cures that take place there amount to thousands, and bear on the most serious and most varied diseases.

A list which is necessarily incomplete is given in the Appendix.[2] It is chiefly composed of cases taken from the *Annals of Our Lady of Lourdes*, and from the reports of the Medical Registration Office.

It happens, of course, that all who are cured do not officially intimate their cure. In comparing

[1] The details of this great miracle are given in the last chapter of Part II.

[2] Appendix, Note 8, p. 376, Fr. ed.

the cures seen by the Lourdes doctors with those reported by particular pilgrimages, it is easy to perceive that the Medical Office only knows about half the cures which are obtained. This is due to want of time at the moment of departure, and perhaps also to distaste on the part of many to submit to a public examination. Nevertheless, the miraculous cures and graces which have been registered by the Grotto authorities amount to over 3350. Were one to add those which have not been officially registered, but have been actually seen by the directors and the members of various pilgrimages, the number would reach about 7000.

The Medical Registration Office alone registers annually from 100 to 200 cases, and even as many as 236.[1]

. . . . . .

Once more we remark that it is not only in cases of the same kind that cures are effected. The mysterious influence does not act only on certain diseases as a natural remedy would do; it is efficacious in the most varied ailments from which the human organism can suffer.

People sometimes imagine that only nervous diseases are cured at the Massabieille Grotto. Many such are cured certainly, some of them of such gravity that their cure equals that of the most dangerous organic disease. They are naturally incurable, and, as a fact, are never cured even at the most celebrated hospitals where such cases are specialised. Nervous patients are subjected to many interesting experiments, no doubt, but they are never cured. Besides, privileged visitors find that the same subjects are

[1] See Appendix, Note 10, p. 468, Fr. ed.

always treated over and over again. As to nervous troubles of a less important nature, which a lively emotion is perhaps sufficient to dispel, it may be that, when they disappear at Lourdes, the result is due to natural causes, it may also be due to higher causes.

On that point we are ignorant, and therefore such doubtful cases cannot be taken as proofs of the existence of the supernatural. But these are not the cases which come most frequently before the Medical Office. All the nervous cures, counting even the gravest, put together, do not amount to one-twelfth part of the cures obtained. But we know from statistics that out of 3353 cases only 265 were nervous.

Tuberculosis alone gives us a much higher figure if considered under all its forms. Pulmonary tuberculosis, tuberculosis of the bone, intestinal tuberculosis, white swelling, lupus, Pott's disease, hip disease, &c., have given occasion to 650 registered cures.

Moreover, without quoting all, there are to be found 497 cures from diseases of the digestive organs and their appendages, 87 from diseases of the circulatory system, of which 51 were cardiac, 146 from lung diseases such as bronchitis, pleurisy, &c., 47 from diseases of the urinary apparatus, 138 from diseases of the groin, 464 from brain affections, 113 from bone diseases, 168 from affections of the joints, 36 from skin diseases, 164 from tumours, 409 from general diseases, and divers others, of which 133 were rheumatism, 17 cancer, and 44 open sores.[1]

We must especially notice 48 blind who received their sight, and 31 deaf and dumb who recovered the faculties of speech and hearing. This is an incom-

[1] See Appendix, Note IV., p. 293; also p. 465, Fr. ed.

plete list of the benefits of every kind which the sick have obtained at the miraculous Grotto. We will now examine a few cases more in detail.

A few Examples

There is a case of spinal disease (Pott's disease) which deforms the vertebral column and causes suppurating ulcers, and which generally indicates a tuberculous state.

This tall young girl, who looks so thin and delicate, comes from Paris. She was baptized at the age of eight, and was seventeen when she made her first Communion. Several of her brothers died unbaptized. When ill she saw Dr. Ferran of the Hôtel-Dieu, then the Surgeon de Necker, but every effort to obtain a cure was in vain.

She heard of Lourdes, and saved up for a year. By going without her tea she managed to put by forty-five francs, the price of her fare. Just then it happened that her parents were in debt for rent, and to help them the girl generously gave up all her savings and all thought of the pilgrimage. But the following year—1895—her goodness was rewarded, for she was admitted among the patients of the National Pilgrimage.

When she arrived she had a certificate from Dr. Cherié. Her spine was bent S-shape; she had a hump both back and front.

On August 21st Léa bathed in the piscina, and a few days after, on her return to Paris, Dr. Cherié wrote as follows:—

"After examining Miss Léa Courtout, living at Rue Saint-Charles, I beg to state that:

"1. The spine is quite straight.

"2. There exists a slight protuberance of the two final dorsal vertebræ.

"3. The left shoulder is slightly raised and the right side of the chest is a little thinner than the left."

In a word, save for these insignificant traces, the evil had disappeared in a few seconds. The spine which had been crooked for eight months, had suddenly become straight.

. . . . . .

Sixteen years earlier, on 20th August 1878, James Tombridge had been taken to Lourdes, lying on a carriage, and incapable of moving. He coughed continually, and his body was covered with abscesses.

In this state he was plunged into the piscina. He came out another man. He dressed himself, walked with a steady gait, and when, on the day of his departure, he went to the station, he carried his own bag and rug. When his wife first saw him she fainted.

In the Avenue de la Reine Hortense in Paris, the people who had seen him taken away in a dying state, ran after him to make sure it was really he. They could not believe their eyes.

He showed himself to two Protestant doctors, who had had charge of him, Dr. Thorens and Dr. MacGeven. They admitted his cure, and congratulated him thereon. But a third doctor, on the contrary, appeared to be as displeased as he was astonished.

"What have they done to cure you?" he asked.

"Nothing, doctor. The Blessed Virgin has cured me."

"That is not possible. There are no such things as miracles. It is mere stupidity to say so. Own that some remedy has been given to you."

"No, I have taken no medicine for a long time, as you well know, doctor. I tell you again that it is the Blessed Virgin who has cured me."

"Enough of your Blessed Virgin! It is not possible. You are a fraud."

Tombridge went away deploring such scant courtesy; but after all what did it matter, for he lived?

. . . . . .

The doctor who attended Léonie Chartron was more just. His client had visited the princes of science in vain. Piorry, Bouvier, and Nélaton were alike unable to do anything for her.

On July 21, 1869, she suddenly regained her health in the piscina. Spinal curvature disappeared instantaneously, and Dr. Gagniard of Avallon had the honesty to write:—

"The sudden and instantaneous cure of Miss L. Chartron at Lourdes is certainly miraculous and absolutely authentic. You may defy the most learned, the most experienced, or the best physician to explain the instantaneous cure of Miss Chartron, who was wasting away in the last stages of paralysis and fever, with suppuration of six vertebræ. The case was beyond treatment, and it is impossible to quote a similar cure within the realms of science.

"E. Gagniard, Senior, M.D."

. . . . . .

On the occasion of the National Pilgrimage of 1892, Mme. Marie Louise Champs left Paris, where

she lived,[1] suffering from coxo-femoral arthritis, which made it almost impossible for her to walk.

A few days later, on returning to Paris, she visited the doctor who had examined her before her departure, and he wrote to Dr. Boissarie:—

"DEAR SIR,—Yesterday I received a visit from Mme. Champs, who, only a few days previously, had left me, when she was in a very pitiable condition. I saw and examined her then for the first time, and found her to be suffering from a very painful and long-standing coxo-femoral arthritis of the left side, and to be almost incapable of movement. . . .

"Now, to my satisfaction, I find Mme. Champs can walk easily. The hip is completely cured, the patient can sit down, kneel, and raise herself again quite easily.

"I do not wish to leave this marvellous result of a journey to Lourdes in obscurity, and I beg of you, my dear sir, to accept the assurance of my kind regards in leaving you free to give whatever publicity you like to this information.

"(Signed) Dr. ARNOULD,

"Late House-Surgeon and Laureate of the Paris Hospitals, 36 Rue de Rennes."

M. Arnould had been much struck by the instantaneous result which had been obtained. The patient had recovered the entire use of her limbs quite suddenly at Holy Communion. The doctor expressed the deep impression he had received in a letter to one of his friends; he had the courage to admit the supreme cause which alone could supply an explanation of the facts.

[1] Passage Waterloo, 1 Rue Chauvelot.

"Dear Sir,—I am writing to you to-night, having been to-day the witness of a true miracle. This patient is the first whom I have seen *as doctor before and after* a miraculous cure. With you, I thank most heartily the all-powerful intervention of Our Blessed Lady."

. . . . . .

White tumours have often been seen to disappear as suddenly as *coxalgia*.

The same year that Mme. Champs was cured, Mlle. Elise Lesage went into the piscina, her leg in a case which she had been forbidden to take off. Her astonishment was great on coming out of the water to find that she could easily stand on the bad foot. She immediately went to the Medical Office, and asked for her splints to be taken off.

"We took off the splints," said Dr. Boissarie, "and discovered the knee which had been encased for so long. There was no sign of stiffness or anchylosis, no swelling or trace of chronic synovitis; the movement was quite free. . . . Every trace of a long lasting disease had apparently disappeared."[1]

More than a year later, when time had confirmed the cure, the president of the Medical Office presented Mlle. Lesage to Dr. de Saint-Germain, surgeon to the Children's Hospital at Paris, and member of the Medical Academy.

"My dear sir," he said, on entering his study, "I have come to tell you of a case which is perhaps unique in your career."

"Let us see," replied the clever surgeon, with a smile, "what is it about?"

"You remember Mlle. Lesage, who had a white

[1] *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxvi. p. 308.

swelling at the knee, and whom you went to see at Amiens?"

"Perfectly."

"In a consultation which you yourself wrote down and signed, you advised first of all actual cautery, and, if there was no improvement, excision of the diseased bone. Well, there was no improvement, and no excision, yet a cure was effected completely, and instantaneously, in a few minutes."

Dr. de Saint-Germain then examined the knee, felt it, and bent it.

"But there is nothing the matter," he said. "The knee is perfect. No sign of congestion or stiffness; the articulation is intact. However did it happen?"

Then Dr. Boissarie related what had happened at Lourdes, and added:

"May I then use you as a witness to this cure?"

"You may," replied the children's surgeon; "I make no reserve. This cure is inexplicable, and is entirely outside our experience."[1]

Dr. Saint-Germain's example could profitably be imitated by many doctors, who have neither his knowledge nor his reputation, yet fear to compromise their modest authority by recognising supernatural causes for these marvellous cures.

True science coupled with honourable sincerity shows more courage.

. . . . . .

Villepinte is an asylum near Paris founded by private charity. It admits young girls suffering from consumption, that terrible scourge which is decimating our population. Its inmates are privi-

[1] *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxvi. p. 309.

leged clients of Our Lady of Lourdes. Many of them coming from all parts have been cured by her.

We have already quoted the eloquent number of the cures from this widespread disease. The interesting cases are very numerous; they include even patients in their third stage of consumption, which is practically incurable. But we will limit ourselves to the young consumptives of Villepinte, who are certified and placed in different wards according to the stage of the disease reached.

Patients in the third stage of phthisis always die. Visiting their ward one day, some one questioned a patient. He asked her how she was getting on.

"Oh!" was the reply, "here our fate is sealed. We do not leave except to go to Lourdes or the cemetery."

So they go to Lourdes, and in great numbers, under the care of the Sisters of Marie Auxiliatrice, who are attached to the hospital. Each pilgrim carries a formal and detailed certificate stating whether she is in the second stage of tuberculosis or the third, and whether the analysis of the expectoration has revealed the existence of the fatal bacilli. On the return of the patients to the hospital, they are examined again by their own doctors, who certify as to whether they have improved in health or not. After which they are, if cured, registered at the Lourdes Medical Office.

Such careful scientific examination makes the case of these young patients from Villepinte particularly interesting. The results obtained are extraordinary.

Let us take, for example, a period of three years, of which special study has been made, during which

the cures can be authenticated as lasting. In 1896 fourteen patients arrived from Villepinte. Eight were cured, and six returned home unchanged. Three years later the eight who had been cured remained quite well. Two had become novices, one a servant, one had gone into business, another was housemaid in London, and yet another governess in Russia. The seventh married, and the eighth became a drilling mistress. As to the six who were not cured, two were still very ill and four had died.

In 1897 the little party from Villepinte was larger, evidently encouraged by the happy results of the preceding year. It comprised twenty patients, of whom eight were cured either completely or partially. As to the twelve others, ten were unchanged, whilst the fate of two of them is unknown.

What had become of the whole party two years later? Of the first eight the cure had been lasting. One was a novice, another a nun, and one a governess in Paris. Two went into business, and three went back to their families. As to the ten who were not cured, five are very ill at Villepinte and five are dead.

In 1898 the party had grown yet larger. Villepinte sent twenty-four patients to Lourdes, with the result that fourteen appeared to be partially or completely cured. Ten returned to the hospital in the same state as they had left. An inquiry made some months after showed that of the fourteen only eight had been permanently cured, and six had had a relapse. Of the final ten, eight were dead and two dying.

Altogether, out of fifty-four young consumptives medically certificated as such, and who had nearly

all reached the third stage of phthisis, twenty-four had been at least partially cured, and often completely and permanently. These young girls were just as ill as those of their companions who had not been favoured, and who were all shortly afterwards dead or dying—the fate which naturally belonged to the first.[1]

If, contrary to all expectation, they were suddenly stopped on their hasty road to death, it cannot be attributed to any other influence than the intervention of God, the Master and Author of Nature. In a few moments the bruised and emaciated lungs were healed. They regained their normal state, and life returned to bodies exhausted and devoured by fever.

In a few months, sometimes even in a few weeks, these lucky girls were as healthy and stout as possible, recovering as much as 10, 20, and 30 lbs. of flesh. It was like a resurrection.

During the National Pilgrimage of 1904, I was present at the Medical Office when the Villepinte patients arrived.

"Well, sister," said Dr. Boissarie to the religious who accompanied them, "how many cures did you have last year?"

"None, doctor."

"None, sister! No cures at all?"

"No, doctor."

The doctor could not understand it.

Suddenly some one said:

"I know the reason, doctor, and I'll tell you. Last year the patients at Villepinte saw that nearly all the hospitals were being laicised, and they were afraid the same thing would happen to their

[1] See Appendix, Note 11, p. 468, Fr. ed.

own hospital. So those who were sent to Lourdes gave up all hope of their cure in order to keep the nuns who were mothers to them, and together they prayed, 'O God, do not cure any of us, but leave us our Mistresses.'"

God left them their Mistresses, but did not cure any of them.

Hearing these words, the young girls bowed their heads; their heroic secret had been revealed.

Brave children! They had offered their lives for these nuns whom others strike and exile. They had generously given up all hope of cure, like that Mme. Catay who had gone to Lourdes, thanks to the generosity of Mlle. Jeanne Tulasne, and who, seeing that her young benefactress had not regained her health, when the Blessed Sacrament passed before her couch made the following generous prayer: "My God, if only one of us is to be cured, let it be Jeanne!"

Immediately a cry resounded through the crowd. Jeanne had arisen from her couch radiant and cured.[1]

God sometimes accepts these beautiful sacrifices. If He always refused them there would be no more merit in offering them. But He keeps an account of them. Charity moves Him more than any other virtue, and His mercy endureth for ever. Nothing is lost by suffering for others.

Although phthisis is easily and unmistakably diagnosed by a competent observer, cancers and wounds strike even the unskilled. Now these tangible evils are the occasion for many cures at Lourdes.

[1] September 8, 1867.

On August 24, 1894, Mlle. Constance Piquet, from Soulaires (Eure-et-Loir), went into the water suffering from a cancer in the breast of three years' growth. Dr. Martin of Lèves had refused to operate on her, as he judged she was incurable. A friend, Mlle. Masson, had seen the cancer just before her departure for Lourdes, and the infirmarian who helped the patient saw and touched it before she bathed in the piscina.

Ten minutes later, when Mlle. Piquet left the bath, without having felt any pain or emotion, she looked at the part affected. The growth was no longer there. Delirious with joy, she showed it to the lady infirmarian.

An hour later, at the Medical Office, fifteen or twenty doctors, among them Dr. Regnauld, professor at the Rennes Medical School, searched in vain for any trace of cancer. It had completely disappeared.

In November 1893 an army surgeon wrote: "I have seen Dr. Martin. He is very nice and loyal, but he does not share our convictions. He, however, unhesitatingly admits the miraculous character of the event which is occupying our minds."

Which after all was an act of simple justice!

. . . . . .

Joachine Dehant's sore healed up almost as quickly as Constance Piquet's cancer disappeared. The cure was marvellous, beyond imagination.

Joachine went to Lourdes with a pilgrimage from Liège. She was suffering from a festering sore, which was $12\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and 6 inches wide—that is, from the knee to the ankle. It penetrated to the bone, and had destroyed the muscles and

tendons, so that the foot turned in and the knee was quite stiff.

This dreadful disease had been the result of cholera followed by typhus, and had lasted for twelve years. The whole system had been drained by it, and this young woman aged twenty-nine weighed only 27 kilos or 59 lbs.

During the journey she had been obliged to change her saturated bandages at the Paray and Agen railway stations, in the full gaze of the public. On September 13, 1878, she reached the Grotto at four o'clock in the morning. Mlle. Léonie Dorval, who had accompanied her, helped her to undress; but, seeing the dreadful condition in which she was, she said to her:

"Joachine, I cannot consent to your getting into the water; it would be an unpardonable rashness."

"I take all the responsibility, Léonie," was the reply. "Just help me to sit on the ground, and I will get alone into the piscina."

"No, Joachine, it will kill you."

But Joachine insisted, and Léonie had to give way. So she bathed, but it was in vain.

"Poor Joachine!" said her friend. "You have such great faith, and yet you are not cured."

"Never mind, it does not matter. I shall come back again."

She did so at nine o'clock. There were very few bathers at that hour, and Joachine bathed for a long time, but she did not take the bandages off her leg.

When she came out of the water, and was being dressed, Léonie touched her bad leg by accident, and the touch did not hurt her. Astonished at this,

Joachine begged her friend to press the place more heavily. But still there was no pain; whereupon Léonie took off the bandages. Suddenly she cried: "Joachine, there is nothing to be seen. You are cured."

Joachine looked, and saw that all that was left was a certain redness. In her joy she cried out: "Long live Our Lady of Lourdes! See how well she does things. She has not only given me a new skin, but fresh flesh and a calf."

Léonie wanted to publish the news abroad, but Joachine, who was still suffering from other troubles, withheld her somewhat. In the evening, however, people got wind of the news, and the curé from Haltinnes came to make inquiries.

"Is it true that your sore has disappeared?'

"Quite true," she replied; "I have no more sore on my leg than you have on your hand."

They took her back to the hotel in triumph, and twenty, thirty, fifty people asked to see the miracle with their own eyes.

They went into her room. There in a corner were shreds of mortified flesh which she had torn off that very morning. She uncovered her leg—the leg which had been rotting away, as she vividly expressed it herself—the evil had disappeared, the scar was solid and firm. Those present were visibly impressed.

The following evening, Joachine Dehant was bathing in the piscina when she was attacked by a violent pain. All her bones seemed to be breaking. At the same time both she and her companion saw her deformed foot straighten itself until it was as straight as the hands on a clock. The leg stretched

to its full length, the muscles uncontracted, and the knee resumed its normal shape. In the hip a movement was felt which caused unutterable pain. Joachine swooned, and Léonie thought she was dying.

But after a time she regained consciousness and opened her eyes. All was over. The pain had completely gone, and her body which had been deformed so long had become straight and agile. They all pressed around her, and accompanied her to the Grotto, where she left her crutches which she no longer needed.

An hour later she followed the torchlight procession like all the other pilgrims. She left with the last, and arrived with the first at the end of the way which winds up the hillside.

Five days later she was back again at Namur, and interviewing her doctor. The latter had given her on leaving a certificate which ran as follows:—

"I, the undersigned, Gustave Froidbise, doctor of medicine, &c., at Ohey, in the province of Namur, Belgium, declare that I have examined Mlle. Joachine Dehant, aged twenty-nine, born at Wanfercée-Baulet, resident at Gesves, and I certify as follows:

"1. Dislocation of the hip-joint on the right side.

"2. Retraction of the lateral tibial muscles of the right leg which causes club-foot (talipes varus).

"3. An ulcer which covers two-thirds of the outer surface of the right leg.

"Hence my present declaration, Ohey, September 6, 1878. Dr. G. Froidbise."

This is the certificate Joachine took to Lourdes. On the day of her return, the doctor added the following:—

"I, the undersigned, doctor of medicine, &c., at Ohey, province of Namur in Belgium, declare that I have examined Mlle. Joachine Dehant, aged twenty-nine, born at Wanfercée-Baulet, and resident at Gesves, and I affirm that the lesions mentioned in the accompanying certificate have completely disappeared. A simple redness shows the place where the ulcer existed. Dr. G. Froidbise.

"Gesves, *Sep. 19th*, 1878."

Such laconic brevity is certainly very eloquent. In two lines it affirms the incontestable reality of an unheard-of fact which reverses all the laws of Nature. Dr. Vergez, the eminent professor of the Faculty of Montpellier, declared this miracle to be "incontestable."

"The sudden cure of a sore," he declared, "or rather of a spreading chronic ulcer, in a very decayed constitution, and the spontaneous reduction of dislocation of the hip, are facts quite outside natural explanation. The history of medicine does not and will never possess such cases."

The cure was so deep-seated, so radical, all the evil germs were so completely destroyed, that the entire organism immediately developed with extraordinary vigour. When Joachine went to Lourdes she only weighed 59 lbs. A few years later she wrote: "To-day I weigh 164 lbs., and I have never ceased, since my cure, to enjoy perfect health."[1]

[1] *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xi. pp. 222 *seq.*

We must pass quickly over this brief and necessarily incomplete list of the divers infirmities which have found a miraculous termination at Lourdes. We have already stated that the protection of the Immaculate Virgin has made the blind to see and the dumb to speak.

Among many others we will take one or two examples. François Vion-Dury had been blind for seven years. Dr. Dor, a distinguished oculist in Lyons, wrote:—

"I, the undersigned, doctor of medicine, &c., declare that Vion-Dury (François), a half-pay soldier from Lalleyriat, in the canton of Nantua (Ain), suffers from a detachment of both retinas. Although the retina of the left eye has adhered again, this eye cannot distinguish day from night. With the right eye M. Vion-Dury can hardly count his fingers at $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches distance. He can do no work, and may be considered as *totally blind* with both eyes, his disease being absolutely incurable. Dr. Dor.

"Lyons, *Sep.* 11*th*, 1884."

Vion-Dury had contracted this infirmity during his time of service. In 1884 he obtained for this reason a pension of 600 francs a year, and later in 1890 he was admitted into the hospital of Confort, near Bellegarde. A fortnight after his arrival at the hospital—that is, on August 2nd—the nuns persuaded him to ask God to cure his blindness. He did not believe he was worthy to obtain so great a grace, and when Sister Martha, having placed a bottle of Lourdes water on the table, had left him alone in his bed, he hesitated to ask for divine assistance.

"Coward!" he said to himself, suddenly. "The devil shan't always have the better of you."

He took out the cork, and begged Blessed Chanel, his countryman, to ask the Blessed Virgin to obtain for him this miracle which he did not dare ask for himself.

Then, as he himself relates, he dipped the tip of his finger in the water three times, and passed it over his eyes.

"The third time I felt a violent pain as if a knife had been plunged into both my eyes. I thought the sister had made a mistake, and given me some ammonia. To make sure, I tasted some. No sooner had the waters touched my lips than *suddenly, like a pistol shot, I could see.* I could distinguish the curtains, the windows—in fact everything.

"'Simon, Simon!' I cried to my neighbour, 'I can see. Go quickly and fetch the sisters!'

"Another man who was not yet in bed came up to me, and said, 'If you can see, tell me how I am dressed.'

"'You have a stick, a hat, and a tie.'

"'It is true! He sees!'

"And they ran to fetch the sisters, who came at once.

"Meanwhile I got up, and when the sisters came they found me sitting on my bed holding the bottle of Lourdes water, and saying:

"'Is it possible! Is it really true! My God, my God! Holy Virgin, my good mother, how good you are!'

"I recognised all those present by their voices, and I said to Sister Gabrielle:

"'Oh, how you are dressed! You have a white

veil like the nuns I saw at Dijon. . . . Oh, is that you, Sister Martha? I thought you were younger when I heard you walk!'

"Since this time I have been as well as if I were twenty."

Three years later, on May 1, 1893, at a meeting of the French Ophthalmic Society at Paris, Dr. Dor rose to address the audience. He recalled the illness of Vion-Dury, who had suffered from double detachment of the retina, which had been, he affirmed, certified by a great number of specialists, and had resisted every treatment. Then he added:

"Vion-Dury remained seven and a half years in this condition, then without special treatment he recovered his normal sight on the occasion of a journey to Lourdes.[1]

"The vision of the right eye is perfect, but that of the left eye is one-third instead of a two-hundredth.

"This is the only known case of a cure happening after so long a time."

The doctor concluded by saying that "never again would he say that an old detachment was incurable. Since Vion-Dury was cured others might be cured."

"No doubt," we might reply, "but only in the same way—namely, by a divine miracle."

Dr. Dor being a Protestant, his evidence is all the more valuable. However, it is not the fact of the cure that we have particularly to emphasise in this instance. It is the instantaneous character of the cure which, as Vion-Dury quaintly remarked, was like a pistol-shot. Even if one ever succeeded

[1] The doctor was mistaken. The patient was cured, as we have seen, without leaving the hospital where he was installed.

in discovering a gradual cure for the disease of the retina from which the soldier was suffering, it would never alter the fact that the present cure was effected without treatment, and was instantaneous, and consequently miraculous.

. . . . . .

Aurélie Bruneau, of Chabris (Indre), was born deaf and dumb. At the age of twenty she put a few drops of Lourdes water into her ear on three successive days, and, on October 11, 1872, she suddenly found she could hear and speak. Of course, she had to learn her words, for language is not acquired intuitively. The family doctor, De la Mardelle, who examined her after the event, wrote as follows:—

"From earliest infancy, this young girl who was placed under my care, offered every symptom of natal deaf-mutism. . . On October 11th, on her return from a pilgrimage to Lourdes, she instantaneously recovered the faculty of hearing. . . . The cure is certain and undeniable. The deaf and dumb girl can hear and speak."[1]

. . . . . .

Five years later the same miracle took place at Lourdes in favour of a child of seven, who had been born deaf and dumb, Rosa Evrard, of Wanlin in Belgium.

Already the preceding year Rosa's father had made a vow to take his daughter to Lourdes as soon as he could afford the expense. Meanwhile, they used to visit the Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes, at Coujoux. When she first entered the Grotto, the child cried out, "My God!" After

[1] See Appendix, Note 21, p. 549, Fr. ed.

which she began to hear a little, and to say a few unintelligible words.

At Lourdes, on August 28, 1897, her tongue was suddenly loosened. Indeed, she spoke so well, that the president of the Medical Office doubted the fact of her past infirmity, in spite of the assertions of her father and of her venerable parish priest. He requested, therefore, a young Belgian doctor who was present, and very interested in the miracle, to make a special inquiry at home, and to let him know the result.

Dr. Delforge undertook his task with zeal, and promptly sent in a report. On September 13th, M. Haversin, the priest at Wanlin, wrote: "Dr. Delforge conducted the inquiry, assisted by Dr. Lurquin, physician to the King's household, at Houyet, and M. Vincent, secretary of the Dinant Cercle.

"Twenty-five witnesses freely attested *on oath* that Rosa Evrard was born deaf and dumb, and that, until the age of six, she never said a word, or made the slightest sound. It was only after a vow on the part of her father to take her to Lourdes, that she seemed to hear a little, and to say a few words, such as, 'My God! papa! mama!' It was at Lourdes that, on coming out of the bath, her double infirmity completely disappeared, since which time she has spoken and heard very distinctly."

Dr. Delforge himself reported the result of the inquiry, and wrote: "The meeting invited contradiction, but no one came to say that the child had not been deaf and dumb."

The following declarations are decisive:—

"I, the undersigned, J. Lurquin, doctor of medicine at Houyet, certify that I saw and examined the child Rosa Evrard, of Wanlin, on the eve of her departure to Lourdes, and found that she could only lisp a few words (papa, &c.). I also certify that I saw the child on her return from Lourdes, and found a very distinct—even miraculous—improvement in her condition. She speaks very distinctly, pronouncing and articulating well. There are a few consonants, such as T and R, which she cannot quite manage.

"Given at Wanlin, September 12, 1897.

"Dr. LURQUIN."

Dr. Delvaux also certified on September 10th of the same year: "I can affirm that Rosa Evrard is no longer deaf and dumb."

Finally, Dr. Louis Rutter, ear-specialist at the Châtelet and Namur hospitals, was called in to examine the child. In his certificate, dated from Namur on October 27, 1897, he said:—

"The little Rosa Evrard . . . can now hear and understand all that is said to her, and she speaks like a person who can hear her own voice. A few defects observed in pronunciation are insignificant, and such as are often found in children of the same age. . . . I can affirm with Dr. Delvaux, burgomaster at Rochefort, that Rosa Evrard is no longer *deaf or dumb;* that she has so quickly learnt to speak, that it has been *practically instantaneous.*"

Here is indeed a miraculous fact medically certified.[1]

Finding it impossible to contest the cures at

[1] See Appendix, Note 12, p. 471, Fr. ed.

Lourdes, men have tried to account for them by natural means. It will be well, therefore, to study more in detail some of the theories brought forward.

Interpretation of the Facts

It may be asserted in a general manner that every interpretation of the wonders at Lourdes which excludes the miraculous, must necessarily give way before three incontestable facts. First, the extraordinary number of these cures, which removes all possibility of a lucky chance; secondly, their nature, which is often beyond all created power; and finally, their manner of working, *e.g.* their instantaneousness.

Each of these considerations is, of itself, capable of producing belief in the supernatural, but the three together make undeniable evidence which no honest and attentive mind can resist.

Certain opponents of the miraculous do not hesitate to avow their difficulty. Dr. Diday, who wrote a pamphlet against the wonders of Lourdes, concluded by saying: "I admit, and I do not mind repeating it, I admit that the cures related by M. Lasserre are astonishing and extraordinary, and far beyond what we, as medical men, are in the habit of observing. Certainly here is something for the most learned to wonder at. I can well comprehend the stupefaction of the witnesses and the gratitude of those happily favoured people."[1]

Dr. Diday referred to the first miracles which followed the visions of Bernadette. What would he

[1] See Boissarie, *Lourdes*, pp. 99, 100.

have said had he known those that have happened since, which far surpass the first in quality as in quantity. He would have found the explanation still more difficult, as he did during the last years of his life.[1]

What, then, are the different solutions proposed by our antagonists? What do they reply to those who ask for an explanation other than divine?

They do not agree among themselves, and the variety of their replies is only equalled by their insufficiency. We will examine each in turn.

That neither the quality of, nor the contact with, the water from the Grotto can explain the cure

At first it was the fashion to attribute the miracles, the existence of which could not be denied, to the medicinal qualities of the Lourdes water.

It was even possible to find, in some tiny Pyrenean village, a chemist whose retorts favoured this hypothesis.

"We *believe* that we are not *too* premature," wrote the proprietor of these retorts, "in saying that, in view of the quality and combination of the substances of this water, medical science will not *perhaps* be long in recognising its especial curative properties, which will class it among those waters which will form the mineral riches of our Department."

Thus all the goodwill of this obliging chemist cannot discover one single medicinal substance in the miraculous water. However, he revenges himself by prophesying as to what others may *perhaps* discover.

[1] See Boissarie, *Lourdes*, p. 70.

This *perhaps* is like Boileau's famous sonnet—it is worth a whole poem.

Shortly after, the municipal authorities, scenting the wealth and riches which might *perhaps* accrue from this water, decided to have the above brief but brilliant analysis confirmed.[1]

The prefect had suggested M. Filhol, an eminent member of the Toulouse Faculty of Science and the most famous chemist in the South of France, as the most competent man, especially as he had made a very thorough study of the Pyrenean mineral waters.

M. Filhol, then, was appointed to analyse the Grotto water. He set to work, and his report was impatiently awaited.

It arrived after two months, and was a heavy blow to the learned men whose prophetic utterances had been biassed by their interested scepticism.

"This analysis," wrote the eminent chemist, "proves that the water from the Lourdes Grotto is a drinkable water, very similar to most of the waters found in mountains whose soil is rich in limestone.

"This water contains *no active substance capable of endowing it with marked medicinal properties;* it may be drunk without inconvenience."[2]

In his letter to the Mayor of Lourdes which accompanied this report, M. Filhol added:—

"The extraordinary effects which are declared to have been obtained by the use of this water cannot be, at least in the actual state of scientific knowledge, explained by the nature of the salts of which the analysis discovers the existence."

[1] Meeting of the Municipal Council at Lourdes, June 3, 1858.

[2] See Appendix, Note 13, p. 472, Fr. ed.

It was a cruel deception for local philosophy.

The gentlemen in question had publicly recognised the marvellous effects of the Grotto water. They had even gone so far as to try to confirm the learned prophecies of the friendly chemist, according to whom might soon be found—*perhaps*—curative properties and—a fortune—in this wonderful water.

What could they say now? They were bound by their own assertions. One thing was certain. They could no longer bring forward the therapeutic virtue of the spring, and in fact they did not attempt to do so. Since M. Filhol's report, this theory is exploded.

. . . . . .

But if the Lourdes water has no curative qualities, might it not act by reason of its temperature, and might not the cures be caused by the cold baths in the piscinas?

This theory has been often advanced in a somewhat vague and roundabout manner. But it is based on utter fallacy.

First of all, Lourdes has not the monopoly of the water-cures. Hydropathy may be, and is, used elsewhere under more perfect conditions, and consequently more effectually. If it were merely a question of hydropathy, the results obtained *here* would be neither more nor less than *elsewhere*. But the fact remains that *elsewhere* the results are nothing like those obtained *here*, and it is a fact moreover very easy to ascertain.

Hence the results are due to some other cause.

Again, a number of cures take place at Lourdes outside the piscina. It may even be said that during the last fifteen or twenty years the greater number

are from outside. Many patients have regained health without ever bathing in the miraculous water, as for instance Vion-Dury, who was cured of his blindness in a hospital far away from Lourdes. Such instances are numerous.

The secret of the cures is not, then, to be found in contact with the water, since cures are obtained without this contact. Besides, experience shows that cold water does not work such miracles. The opponents of Lourdes have recognised this fact, and their latest theory is that the miracles in question are due to suggestion.

Let us see how much their theory is worth.

On the Insufficiency of Suggestion to Explain these Miraculous Phenomena

"How were you cured?" asked a doctor one day of a person who had been suffering for four years from suppurating hip-disease and deep caries of the bone, and had suddenly found renewed strength in the piscina a few days before. Pains and sores had all disappeared in an instant.

This doctor's philosophy was not equal to the task of explaining matters. Rather than admit supernatural intervention, he preferred to pose as an intelligent inquirer into facts which he could not honestly deny. So he asked the young girl:

"How were you cured? Who cured you?"

"Who? Our Lady cured me."

The doctor, smiling contemptuously, with an air of superior wisdom, replied:

"Never mind the Blessed Virgin. Leave her out of the question. Admit that you were told before-

hand that you would be cured. Some one, perhaps, said to you: 'Once at Lourdes, at such or such a moment you will leave the splints in which you are bound.' Such things do happen. It is what we call suggestion."

The young girl replied in all simplicity that such had not at all been the case. Besides, she did not know what suggestion meant. The visitor explained, and offered her Zola's book, which, he said, would make her understand still better. But she refused to even look at it. He immediately got very angry, and tried to intimidate her. Then, seeing her trembling and upset at this unexpected conduct, he became calmer, and, she relates, "offered me money if I would admit that I had been cured by suggestion." She indignantly refused, and the doctor went away grumbling, saying, "that the case was certainly very extraordinary, but that he was determined to find out what it all meant."

And this is what every opponent of the supernatural comes to. There are certainly very few who try to bribe as this one did, but all have their theories very much at heart, and do all they can to advance them.

I am afraid that few really know about this suggestion of which they talk so much. I was very surprised myself, on reading the works of masters on this subject, to find that they say nothing at all of what I had so often heard repeated in the consulting-room and elsewhere. I came to the conclusion that even many doctors only know suggestion from hearsay, and that their ideas on the subject are grossly exaggerated.

We shall prove this to be a fact.

Disputed Facts

If the efforts of professed hypnotisers do not attain the results attributed to them by outsiders, at any rate they produce some results—that is, if we are to believe what these hypnotisers themselves say.

But can we believe all they say? Are we to admit all they propose? Many, even among those who share their dislike for the miraculous, say not.

On the occasion of a long dissertation by M. Liégeois, M. Frank said before the *Academy of Moral and Political Science*:—

"I do not attempt to deny the existence of hypnotic phenomena; I only say that those presented by M. Liégeois have no warrant of certainty."[1]

M. Liégeois is not the only one whose observations have been severely criticised. In a famous lawsuit at the Paris Court of Assizes, the head of the Medical Faculty, M. Brouardel, poured scorn on the theories of the Nancy professors, who are known as the most advanced hypnotisers in France.

"It seems," said the great man, smiling, "that these things happen at Nancy, but not in Paris. A well-known upholder of psychotherapy said to me in the Lourdes Medical Office before a score of doctors: 'Bernheim's experiments were badly made. I do not attach any importance to them.'"[2]

And Bernheim is at this very moment the respected head of the Nancy School!

However, for the sake of argument, we will admit that Bernheim's experiments are quite certain, and we will allow ourselves for the time being to be guided by his principles.

[1] Liégeois, *De la Suggestion* (Paris, 1889), p. 152.

[2] See Appendix, Note 29, p. 559, Fr. ed.

Suggestion and Nervous Diseases

We begin by separating nervous diseases from all others, for they must be treated apart. Many, even clever, people who speak contemptuously of the marvellous happenings at Lourdes, attribute them all indiscriminately to nervous influence over the organism. One would think, to hear them talk, that the existence of nervous diseases was quite unknown until these latter days.

But they are mistaken. Medicine has certainly made great progress in this branch of science. But it is no new science, and, what may perhaps astonish certain prejudiced minds, the Church herself has not neglected it.

Thus, in his celebrated treatise *On the Beatification of the Servants of God*, Benedict XIV. warns those who had to prove the miracles necessary for the canonisation of Saints.

He did not wish to be regarded as miraculous such cures as might be explained by nervous influence. According to him, the miraculous was rarely to be admitted in cases of hysteria, epilepsy, and sundry forms of paralysis. Particularly with reference to hysteria, he said:—

"In cases of hysteria the miraculous is not to be found in the disappearance of attacks but in the cessation of the morbid state which produce them."[1]

And he adds: "It is important also to notice that hysterical women are subject to natural crises which may produce perfect deliverance from their malady.

"Such cures, then, are very difficult to class as

[1] De Canoniz., Book IV., Art. I., ch. xiii., note 14.

miraculous. If the promoters of cases for beatification, or canonisation, have ever tried to do so, I have never known them to succeed."

Thus we see that the Church looks somewhat distrustfully on the extraordinary facts that nerve influence may sometimes explain.

If there is the slightest shadow of a doubt, she prudently puts them on one side, and the doctors of the Medical Office follow her example.

In the conversation related above, when Dr. Boissarie presented Mlle. Elise Lesage to Dr. Saint-Germain, a member of the Academy of Medicine, he said:—

"This cure, my dear sir, took place in the Lourdes piscina. I may perhaps say that you have never come across a similar case."

"I beg your pardon," returned the physician: "I have, and under similar conditions. I had charge, for a long time, of a young girl suffering from coxalgia. All my remedies were of no avail. She was cured at Lourdes both radically and instantaneously."

And Dr. Saint-Germain gave the girl's name.

"True," replied Dr. Boissarie, "this young girl was cured at Lourdes. But we did not publish the cure, for we doubted nervous coxalgia."

"It was not nervous coxalgia," said the eminent specialist: "it was a very real disease with grave articular lesion."

Thus the prudence of the Medical Office had been excessive. The cure of an organic disease had been unacknowledged from fear of admitting a cure of nervous origin.

Does this mean that natural agents, whether

physical or moral, can cause the immediate disappearance of all the affections where nerves alone seem to play a part?

Certainly not.

It would be sufficient to quote as examples these eternal "subjects" that Charcot and some others have been treating so long.

If any great doctor had been able to cure them, he would surely have done so. No one would dare suggest that they were kept in their condition for the purpose of experimental study. Such cruelty would be revolting.

It must be admitted, then, that these famous hysterical patients of whom we have heard so much were incurable by the methods employed by the masters in science. In fact, Bernheim admits that all nervous diseases do not yield to hypnotic treatment or to suggestion.

And yet it is "to neurotic diseases that psychotherapy is chiefly applied."[1]

But many neurotic diseases, both numerous and important, are beyond it. Take, for example, neurasthenia. Is it within the power of suggestion? Listen to the answer:—

"When neurasthenia is hereditary, when it is due to a vicious conformation of the nervous system, then one must admit that it is more often than not incurable."[2]

And we shall see the numbers of diseases which can hope for nothing from suggestion.

"The lists of the maladies to which the unhappy

[1] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme, Suggestion, Psychothérapie* (Paris, 1903, 2nd edit.), p. 319. All our references refer to this edition.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 337.

martyrs to their nervous system are prone, and whose life is one long torment, is long:—Brain troubles: vertigo, hemicrania, photophobia, visual obnubilation, singing in the ears, apathy, excitation, headache; spinal troubles: rachialgia, sharp pains, formication, weakness, hot and cold sensations, unaccountable tinglings, slight paralysis, tremblings and palpitations, shocks, subsultus; nervous troubles of the periphery: neuralgia, local hyperæsthesia, muscular cramp, perspiration, congestion and cutaneous eruptions; visceral troubles: dyspepsia, pneumatosis, abdominal enlargement; heart and lung troubles: syncope, oppression, hard breathing, pseudo-asthma, pseudo-angina pectoris; mental troubles: fears, obsession, difficulty of thought, agoraphobia, nightmares, &c.

"The list of complicated and various manifestations which beset the unhappy victims of nerves is inexhaustible."[1]

All these effects of "fatal neurasthenia, if I may so call it, which is both hereditary and widespread,"[2] are quite outside the realms of suggestion, and incurable.

Very rarely even a simple improvement of any duration is obtained by the most persevering suggestion.

"Soon the evil reappears in all its intensity, the patient and the doctor—[what! even the doctor!] lose confidence in the suggestive treatment; the unfortunate victims run from one specialist to another, exhibit their misery at every mineral watering-place, go from hydropathy to massage, from homœopathy

[1] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme*, &c., p. 319.

[2] The passages between inverted commas in these pages on suggestion are all quoted from Bernheim's work.

to allopathy or Count Mattei's granules. Such is the sad Odysée of many neurotic people!"

True neurasthenics, who are neurasthenics by temperament, are thus warned: psychotherapy can do nothing, or hardly anything, for them. It is almost powerless too, according to Bernheim, "against inveterate hypochondria or any mental trouble."[1]

"I have tried many times to cure melancholia, hypochondria, obsession, persecutory mania, and I have *always* failed."[2]

It is the same with epilepsy: "I have tried hypnotic influence with many epileptics or even simple epileptic vertigo, and I have not obtained any notable or lasting results."[3]

At the same time, "chorea—I speak of true chorea—is not to be cured by suggestion. . . . Suggestion, no better than any other remedy, cannot stop St. Vitus' dance. The disease must run its course."[4]

"Tetanus also resists suggestion."[5]

Thus, according to the head of the School, if its most recent reports are to be believed, a large number of nervous diseases, such as tetanus, chorea, epilepsy, obsession, sundry manias, melancholia, hypochondria, as well as the numerous forms of neurasthenia, are never cured by suggestion.[6]

[1] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme*, &c., p. 319.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 340. [3] *Ibid.* p. 341. [4] *Ibid.* p. 342. [5] *Ibid.* p. 343.

[6] This is confirmed by the German doctor Hoffmann of Düsseldorf. "General opinion," he says, "has great faith in the therapeutic effects of suggestion in nervous illnesses (hysteria, &c.). It is astonishing, however, to find that only in very rare cases does a purely suggestive treatment obtain lasting results. *Each time* that I have tried to influence such diseases (and for

Of this most important fact, many people, who lightly discuss this subject, appear to be entirely ignorant. They would be very astonished to learn by whom the fact is proclaimed.

. . . . . .

Another precept inculcated by Bernheim, and one useful to remember, is that those diseases, which in themselves may or may not be nervous, should not be regarded as necessarily nervous because they are found in nervous subjects, even when the subjects are hysterical.

"There is the case of a girl of thirty who, since the age of sixteen, has suffered from incomplete hemiplegia of the left side, with certain hysterical symptoms. . . . The many doctors who have examined the patient were deceived by the hysterical manifestations so far as to attribute everything to hysteria.

"But I have proved her hemiplegia to be really organic; there is exaggeration of the tendon reflexes in the knee and foot; there is a characteristic stiffness of the upper member which is always in semi-flexion and offers resistance to both flexion and extension; there is hemiplegic contraction of the left side of the face paralysed at the outset, such as is never found in hysterical paralysis."[1]

Thus spake the undoubted master of suggestion. And yet I have heard men of reputed ability gravely assert that every case of paralysis cured at Lourdes was a case of hysteria, and that the cure might be

many years I have worked hard at this), I have only been able to obtain *temporary* results."—*Ueber die Anwendung der physicalischen Heilmetoden.* Halle a.d. Salle, Marhold, 1898.

[1] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme,* &c., p. 353.

attributed to moral influence, whenever the subject were at all inclined to be nervous, even without being hysterical.

Evidently they do not know what they are talking about.

One day a doctor of some distinction refused to recognise as organic a case of paralysis cured before his eyes, because the patient had once, during the whole course of her life, had a fainting fit, and that on her mother's death!

Might not this peculiar prejudice be one of those fearful manias for which the Nancy School holds out no hope of cure?

. . . . . .

We mention another very important observation, made by the erudite professor. It is that a disease which is hysterical in origin, may, if it be prolonged, produce real organic lesions, and hence become incurable by suggestion.

Here, for example, is a patient with whom a contusion or rheumatism has affected the limbs or the nerves of the thigh. Time and suitable treatment may cure the organic disorder. But the "pain may, because of a special nervous tendency in certain subjects, still remain. With such people the nervous system is apt to retain the modality acquired; it continues, by means of a kind of unconscious self-suggestion, to cause pain, weakness, and contraction. The immobilised limb sets up a muscular contraction, an anchylosis through fibrous retraction. Nervous coxalgia is thus brought about which may become incurable; it is then a secondary organic lesion grafted on to a functional trouble."[1]

[1] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme*, &c., p. 322.

Further on the writer returns to this idea. Suggestion, he says, may cure or improve accidental neurasthenia, "on condition that the disease is not too inveterate, that habit has not caused it to settle in the nerve centres."[1]

This last result requires time. It can be observed in simple nervous twitches: in time they become organic.

"I have cured convulsive twitching," writes Bernheim, "of several months' or even a year's date. If the affection is of long standing, and the nervous system has contracted an unconquerable habit, suggestion may fail."[2]

In reality he has never found it successful in these conditions; a year is the extreme limit beyond which he cannot state any success. Thus the slightest of nervous functional troubles—twitching—may in a very short time engender deep organic disorders which render it incurable.

What is to be said, then, of more serious functional troubles which originate from the nerves?

Evidently, however short their duration, the organic evil thereby engendered is much more widespread and much deeper seated.

This theory, which Bernheim explained very clearly without any hesitation or doubt, has a considerable bearing on the authentication of the Lourdes cures.

Here is its logical conclusion. In illnesses which are certainly of nervous origin, still more in those of doubtful origin, if the functional trouble is of long standing, it has become organic, and psycho-

[1] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme*, &c., p. 336.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 343.

therapy is powerless to improve it. Such is the teaching of the Master.

This cuts short the discussion on suggestive therapeutics sometimes indulged in by persons who should be better informed. When such diseases are cured there is no need to trouble about their origin. It is certain that they eventually become organic, and therefore incurable by suggestion.

Suggestion and Organic Diseases

What is to be said of diseases organic from the beginning? With these, suggestion is, if possible, even more helpless.

Let us hear what Bernheim has to say on the subject:—

"Suggestion is a remedy which is almost exclusively functional. It may succeed in re-establishing disturbed functions, but cannot cure diseased organs."[1]

And again: "Suggestion cannot reset a dislocated joint, bring down a rheumatic swelling, or restore destroyed cerebral matter.[2]

"The direct rôle of mind-healing with reference to organic lesion should not be exaggerated; it is limited. It cannot bring about resolution of inflammation, stop the growth of a tumour or arrest the process of sclerosis. Suggestion does not kill microbes, it does not heal a gastric ulcer." Neither can one "suggest" to tubercles to disappear.[3]

What, then, can psychotherapy, however restricted it may be, effect in these different cases?

Let us take tuberculosis, for example. The

[1] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme*, &c., p. 320.
[2] *Ibid.* pp. 321, 322. [3] *Ibid.* p. 325.

physician will try by suggestion to suppress or diminish certain effects of the disease over which he has, as he asserts, some control. Such are coughing, sleeplessness, &c.

"By so doing," he says, "I help the patient if I do not cure him. Sometimes even by clearing the ground, so to speak, I increase his power of resistance against the invading microbe, and thus I slacken, if I do not arrest, morbid development."[1]

Behold all that these gentlemen can do, according to their chief! And a few pages further on, in reference to psychotherapeutics applied to organic disease, the latter writes somewhat sadly: "Only what is curable can be cured. . . . Suggestion cannot restore what is destroyed."[2]

And on the following page we find: "It must be acknowledged: The results obtained are temporary. Suggestion may restore a function so long as some lesion has not definitely abolished it, or so long as the trouble is purely dynamic and outside the field of lesion. Suggestion does not moderate the organic evolution of disease, very often it only effects a transitory improvement; diseases of their nature spreading and progressive, such as locomotor-ataxy, disseminated sclerosis, continue their inexorable march, and a time comes when suggestion can do nothing." Mark it well, even for the functions; it can never do anything for lesions!

. . . . . .

The reader cannot fail to be edified! He knows that the efficacy of therapeutic suggestion is very

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 325. The Swedish specialist on Suggestion, Dr. Wetterstrand, teaches the same theory. Also see Appendix, Note 23, p. 554, Fr. ed.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 352.

restricted in nervous diseases, and absolutely *nil* in the organic diseases as far as cure goes. His mind full of this indisputable doctrine which comes from Nancy, the most advanced school of suggestion, let him remember the marvellous cures which take place at Lourdes, and which no intelligent man ever seeks to deny.

The conclusion is obvious. It is impossible to attribute them to suggestion, for they often deal with organic diseases of the most complicated nature over which suggestion has no influence.[1]

But there is another reason for rejecting this explanation, as we are about to see.

Two Methods of Cure

The manner in which many cures are effected at the Grotto totally differs from that by which psychotherapeutics work when efficacious. The results of psychotherapeutics are essentially *slow and gradual*, they are not instantaneous.

The teaching and experiments of Bernheim are our proof. The professor relates among his best successes how he cured a woman of acute articular inflammation of the knees. He did not cure it directly, but by overcoming the pain; and the patient, feeling no more pain, cured herself because she was able to move the joint in every direction.

But the result was arrived at gradually. "The pain being suppressed," says Bernheim, "the articular movements which it had paralysed were *gradually* restored."[2]

[1] See Appendix, Note 22, p. 552, Fr. ed.

[2] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme*, &c., p. 327.

In the case of a young girl suffering from acute rheumatism, which had left, among other effects, a painful contraction of the limbs, the cure was effected as follows:—

"The suggestion made during a state of wakefulness, and the suggestive impulse given by the sister, cured contraction in a few weeks. The patient was gradually able to lift her arms horizontally and to stand up on her feet; her body, bent from the pelvis when standing, was straightened gradually under the influence of *patient* and *prolonged* suggestion."[1]

Sceptics might reply, as Bernheim himself thought, that the organic lesion having already disappeared, only the functions remained affected, and the cure might, and did, come naturally without the persuasive assertions of the good sister of the ward in the least contributing to the cure.

But even if we acknowledge that they exercised a real influence, at any rate this influence was very slow in its effects. The Nancy professor mentions elsewhere certain cases of neuralgia which he was able to cure, cases which were purely nervous and in which there was no question of lesion. The pain may return at first, he writes, but "by persevering for several days it finally disappears entirely."[2]

The same thing happens with "painful sympathetic troubles, such as discomfort, intestinal neuralgia, vomiting connected with uterine or abdominal affections"; these may be eased and sometimes even cured.

"There are always relapses, but repeated sugges-

[1] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme*, &c., p. 327.
[2] *Op. cit.* p. 344.

tion, patiently and perseveringly prolonged during weeks and months, may result in eradicating these troubles."

We have seen that psychotherapeutics could not cure neurasthenia which was due to individual temperament. It seems, however, that it does succeed in suppressing certain nervous troubles.

"This improvement," says the learned professor, "may be permanent in some cases if aided by *prolonged* and *repeated* suggestion."[1]

That this *method of cure needs time* is, then, an indisputable fact.

. . . . . .

This proves that to attribute the instantaneous cures at Lourdes to suggestion is altogether beside the mark. For, as experience sufficiently proves, suggestion has no instantaneous effect. This is frankly acknowledged by the hypnotisers themselves.

Instantaneousness is a striking characteristic of the great cures at Lourdes. It is not always present, but very frequently, and that is sufficient for our argument.

Everything grows slowly; Nature moves step by step; she walks; she does not run, nor does she leap, as the old motto tells us: *Natura non facit saltum.* God alone can act otherwise, because He alone can do without the aid of Nature, and dispense with her laws.

Suggestive therapeutics, on the contrary, as all other therapeutics, necessarily depend on nature, and must submit to her ordinary procedure. This fact stands the test of every philosophy and religion.

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 337. The hypnotisers Delbœuf and Wetterstrand teach the same doctrine. Also see Appendix, Note 24, p. 555, Fr. ed.

Let us say it again: Suggestion acts by degrees —when it does act. At Lourdes, on the contrary, cures take place with lightning speed. And such cures! The most difficult, the most unexpected, the most important, and at the same time the most clear, the most striking, the most obvious!

For six years Mme. Drossing suffered from cancer in the left breast, and from implicated glands in the armpit. She took two baths in the miraculous piscina. All was over, and no trace of the disease remained.

"I should not have been more surprised," said Dr. Teuwen, her physician, "had I seen a leg grown again."[1]

Mlle. Marie Moreau, of Beziers, had an ulcerated tumour of a similar nature; her extreme weakness prevented operating upon it. She made a novena, put a compress of Lourdes water on the part affected, and went to sleep.

When she woke up, two and a half hours after, she instinctively placed her hand on her chest. Could it be true? She could not believe it. There was no tumour — only a regular and well-closed scar remained as the trace and proof of the disease which had so suddenly disappeared.[2]

"The suddenness of this cure," wrote Dr. Martel, who immediately visited her, "is enough to prove that it is outside the action of Nature. It may be placed, without any doubt, among the cures which are completely and evidently due to supernatural causes."

[1] May 2, 1885. Mme. Drossing was forty-four years old. She came from Tongres (Limbourg, Belgique). See *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xviii. pp. 31, 131, 132.

[2] August 1876. See *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. x. p. 12

A young girl from Poitiers, Amélie Chagnon, also felt the immediate effects of intervention from heaven. The bone of her left foot was carious; the caries extended throughout the whole of the bone, which was perfectly supple and detached from the adjacent muscles, beside which a white swelling had made it necessary to put the whole leg, including the knee, into splints.

On August 21, 1891, a charitable infirmarian, Mme. de la Salinière, undid the bandages, in order that the girl might bathe, and she noticed abundant suppuration. A few moments later Amélie entered the piscina. Suddenly she called out in a triumphant voice, "I am cured!"

The wound was inspected; it was found to be healed; the knee was no longer swollen or painful, but had regained its normal condition. The cure had taken place under the very eyes of six persons who were looking after the young girl. Half-an-hour afterwards she was at the Medical Office.

"We looked in vain," said the president of this office, "for any trace of lesion. There was none either in the foot or the knee."

Dr. Dupont had examined the patient on the eve of her departure for Lourdes, as he himself declared and afterwards related.

"On her return, these are the exact observations I made: the sinus, about 0·02m. ($\frac{4}{5}$ inch), had disappeared; the wound was healed completely, firmly, and solidly. There was no sensibility to the touch on the different parts of the ankle joint."

Six days later, on September 5th, Dr. Gaillard of Parthenay, in his turn, also wrote:—

"I, the undersigned, &c., certify that Mlle. Amélie

Chagnon, whom I attended for osteitis of the left foot and chronic inflammation of the knee, is completely cured, without any remaining trace of these affections."[1]

. . . . . .

All this is very far removed from the cure of that famous sore of which Charcot tells us!

For Charcot knew that wounds were closed at Lourdes, a fact which embarrassed him. It was necessary, at all costs, to prove that nervous influence could heal sores, else how get away from the supernatural?

But Charcot had never come across a single instance in all his long career, in spite of the fact that he lived among the best known victims of hysteria in the world. Neither did he know of any among the observations made by his contemporaries or predecessors. He had to go back to the year 1731, and to the story of Deacon Paris. There he found that a person, affected with a sore on the breast, had cured herself by applying to the part affected a handful of earth taken from the grave of the famous Jansenist saint.

"It must, however," he says, "be added that the wound was not healed until the end of the month, *eighteen days after*, and that the patient could not go out or get into a carriage until September 30th —that is to say, forty-eight days later."

This is the only fact that the author of *La Foi qui guérit* could bring against Lourdes and its miracles, which, to tell the truth, he opposes without mentioning them.

I have no wish to discuss the authenticity of

[1] See *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxvi. p. 248.

these old histories of Deacon Paris which Charcot admits off-hand with a most edifying, childlike faith. Let us suppose that they are true in substance as well as in detail. If, as the Jansenists asserted, there was supernatural influence, the cure proves nothing in favour of auto-suggestion. If, on the other hand, the result should be attributed exclusively to the feeling of confidence that the ulcer would be healed, how is it that the same result has not been obtained since, over and over again, with nervous subjects who have been treated by scores.[1]

Finally, if auto-suggestion did really produce the result as asserted, it would be still necessary to recognise that in this unique event, of which its history might well be proud, it acted with nothing like instantaneousness. *Eighteen days* were needed completely to heal the wound and *forty-eight days* to really cure the patient.

Such distant and doubtful cases are not to be compared to the sudden cures which astonish pilgrims to the Grotto.

. . . . . .

And, indeed, examples are easy to give, for the story of Lourdes is full of them. Léonie Chartron, from Lormes in Nièvre, had suffered for five or six years from ulceration of the intervertebral cartilages, a terrible affection known as Pott's disease. She had a large hump on her back. In 1869 she was conveyed to Lourdes in a sleeping-car.

"Then," relates the doctor who was attending her, M. Gagniard of Avallon, "she was taken to the

[1] It must be added that to attribute the healing of a sore to suggestion is quite contrary to the express teaching of Bernheim. See also Appendix, Note 25, p. 555, Fr. ed.

spring; she entered and was cured, having no further need of help in walking, going and coming actively and gaily. *Her hump had disappeared instantaneously.* Since, her health has always been excellent."[1]

Ten years later, in August 1878, a Paris lady, Mme. Duval, was attended by Dr. Cotin, who found her to be suffering from white swelling on the left elbow and from a suppurating cavity, in which, as he expressed it, "a medium-sized nut might have been lodged."

He saw his patient again on her return from Lourdes on September 11th, and found "the wound completely healed, the *hole filled up* . . . no suppuration, no serosity." He added:—

"From these facts may be concluded the unexpectedness of the complete and rapid cure of an illness which, according to ordinary medical rules, would have required weeks and even months to be cured, supposing that it were curable at all, for the progress of the disease was such that the necessity for amputation was feared.

"In testimony whereof, &c.,

"H. Cotin."[2]

Here the definite words of Professor Vergez, Associate of the Faculty of Medicine at Montpellier, are to the point:—

"The instantaneous cicatrisation of wounds, or rather the sudden *regeneration* of the constituent elements of the dermis and epidermis, *i.e.* scarf skin and true skin, is quite outside the realm of Nature's forces."[3]

[1] See *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. v. pp. 30, 270.
[2] *Ibid.* vol. xi. p. 151. [3] *Ibid.* vol. xiii. p. 315.

But this supernatural phenomenon has frequently taken place at Lourdes. Take, for instance, the wound, 32 centimetres (12·8 inches) long, of Joachine Dehant, which disappeared so quickly that Joachine said: "It was as if some one had put a stocking of new skin on to my poor rotten old leg."

Soon we shall see the still more recent case of Mme. Rouchel of Metz.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile let us give a few examples of that sudden reconstitution of organic elements which wrung from the eminent professor of Montpellier a cry of faith and admiration.

We have seen how Mlle. Elise Lesage was instantly cured of a white swelling in the knee. At the Medical Office her splints were removed, and the president of the office, Dr. Boissarie, made the following note: "All her movements are free. The thigh above the knee was 3 centimetres (1·2 inch) shorter than that of the other side, but in the evening, when measured again, it was already 2 centimetres (0·8 inch) longer.[1]

On July 2, 1873, Caroline Esserteau, who an hour previously had been a corpse, according to the expression used by Dr. Peyrusse, who had seen her at the Crypt, came out of the piscina suddenly transformed.

"I saw my corpse return from the Crypt," wrote Dr. Peyrusse. "It was no longer a corpse . . . Caroline walked before me with a steady and certain gait. The muscular force and sensitiveness of her limbs had returned. It was a miracle."[2]

[1] *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxv. p. 102.

[2] *Guérison de Caroline Esserteau* (Paris, 1895), p. 61. See the same for the details which follow.

The newly-risen girl went directly to the father's house, where her great friend Pauline Mercier cried with joy at seeing her, and was amazed to find her legs, but lately so emaciated and thin, become suddenly strong. Caroline showed them in all simplicity. Were they not the tangible proofs of her miracle?

Dr. Cavayé also saw them. They were filled out like those of a person who has not been ill.

A short time after, on October 10th, Dr. Grimaud, inspector of the waters at Barèges, also bore witness to the "fulness of the lower limbs, formerly atrophied. . . . In the upper limbs," he added, "there was a similar regeneration of the muscular fibre."

Evidently Nature does not work with such terrific rapidity.

Finally, let us quote a very extraordinary case—as extraordinary as it is touching—of the cure of two sisters, Lucie and Charlotte Renauld, who were both afflicted with the same disease, and both cured within a year in the same marvellous manner.

In August 1891, Lucie came with a medical certificate affirming that she was suffering from "muscular atrophy of the left leg, the result of infantile paralysis." The leg was both shorter and thinner, and the girl limped along with one heel a good inch above the other. After a final bath in the piscina, on August 24th, the two legs were equal, both as regards length and stoutness.

The matter was investigated at the Medical Office, where the young girl took off her boots and stockings. With her feet bare she did not limp, but she limped, on the contrary, with her right foot when she put on the boots again.

A doctor was asked to accompany her to a cobbler's. The heels were levelled, and the girl immediately walked like any one else.

The affliction of which Lucy was cured was hereditary in her family, and her sister Charlotte also suffered in the same way. Encouraged by Lucie's example she made up her mind to ask the Blessed Virgin to cure her, and the following year she accompanied the National Pilgrimage to Lourdes (1892).

Dr. Monnier, surgeon of St. Joseph's Hospital, at Paris, had examined her on July 12th.

"We made her lie down," he wrote in his certificate, "and we found a difference in the length of the right leg of 0·03m. (1·25 inch)."

It was the same amount of difference as in her sister's case, only it was on the other side.

"Nothing else," continued the surgeon; "no disease, no congenital dislocation of the hip."

Charlotte went to Lourdes. She limped into the piscina, but on coming out she found that her legs were of equal length. She dressed herself, but she could not walk with her right shoe, which was raised on a very high heel and a strong cork sole.

Some days after her return to Paris, Dr. Monnier examined her again. Every precaution was taken to avoid the slightest error.

"We made the child lie down: right and left crests of the ilia and trochanters were absolutely in line. Although aged eighteen, Charlotte had grown since July 12th from 2 to 3 centimetres ($\frac{4}{5}$ to $1\frac{1}{5}$ in.); moreover, the doctor found that the right leg had been lengthened, and was even a fraction longer than

the other leg. Hence all trace of lameness had disappeared.

The observations made at Lourdes at the time of the cure were thus authentically proved. It was a certain fact that with Charlotte, as with her sister, one leg 3 centimetres shorter than the other had suddenly been lengthened just so much in the miraculous water, and that the lameness which had lasted four years had also been radically cured in a minute.

The learned surgeon of St. Joseph's Hospital, when verifying this unexpected event, could not help exclaiming that it was "absolutely extraordinary." Such it certainly was, and even more! For Nature alone could not suddenly cause skin, muscles, and even bone to grow 3 centimetres longer, and, besides, limit her action to the one limb which needed it. Yet this is what happened.

Were we not right in saying that marvellous phenomena happen at Lourdes which no natural causes could produce, and that, moreover, they are accomplished with a rapidity, a suddenness, an instantaneousness, that suggestive therapeutics wots not of! Doubt is impossible; the facts are there!

No Suggestion at Lourdes

Finally, let us remark that suggestion, in order to act after its own way and manner, must necessarily exist.

But it does not exist at Lourdes. Take, for example, quite little children who regain their health. George Lemesle, aged two years and seven months, was cured of infantile paralysis (1895); Fernand

Balin, aged two years and six months, was cured of a crooked knee (1895); little Duconte, two years old, whom his doting mother carried to the Grotto in an almost dying condition (1858), was restored to health; Yvonne Aumaître, whom the doctor, her father, plunged into the miraculous water in spite of her cries, was taken out cured of a double club-foot (1896); at the age of nineteen months, A. Mertens was cured of paralysis in the right arm (1895); Pierre Estournet, an unweaned baby, had his eyes cured (1864); and lastly, Paul Mercère was cured of two congenital ruptures when a year old (1866).

Of course there is no question of psychotherapeutics in such cures. What, then, causes them? For every effect must have a cause.

Reply, then, you, who in your secret hearts declare there is no such thing as a miracle. What has cured these children of incurable infirmities? Who has cured them, and, most of them, in a few minutes?

It was not persuasion that healed the fungous ulcer of Lucie Fraiture, who had no hope of being cured (1873), or Lucie Faure, who had been ill for twenty-eight years, and who only bathed to please her companions.[1]

Neither was it persuasion that, on September 17, 1901, gave sight to Kersbilck, the blind beggar of Lille, who rarely went to church, and who was

[1] August 24, 1882, Dr. Lagasse, Lucie Faure's doctor, himself declared that she had no hope of being cured of an old infirmity to which she had become accustomed. See *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xvi. p. 347. For Lucie Fraiture, see *Annales*, vol. viii. p. 139, and vol. ix. p. 227.

so little familiar with Lourdes that he called the *brancardiers* (porters), *braconniers* (poachers)!

Again, what impression cured the poor woman of Ain who returned from the diocesan pilgrimage as ill as when she went. Some unkind free-thinkers teased her about the unhappy result of her journey. Worn out, she went to bed early, and was soon asleep. In the morning, when she woke up, a new life surged through her veins; her illness had disappeared—she was cured![1]

There have been many other similar cases. Sick

[1] This woman was Louise Lescuyer, a native of Grièges, who had hip-disease on the right side, and whose stomach was extremely feeble. She was cured on September 18, 1902, at the hospital at Pont-de-Veyle. (See *Journal de la Grotto*, January 18, 1903.)

Still more recently, Marie-Louise Mouchel, of Yvetot, went to Lourdes suffering from a gaping and suppurating wound, the result of an operation for appendicitis. On her return she found, when awaking, that the wound had closed and was quite healed. This fact was certified by the doctor who had attended her for three years.

"The scar of the abdominal incision," he wrote, "was distended and mortified, resulting in a substantial loss of flesh about the size of a two-franc piece and one centimetre deep. In spite of daily aperients of all kinds, the patient suffered terribly from constipation. I certify that all these symptoms disappeared the day after her return from Lourdes.—Yvetot, August 5, 1904."

There is another older but better known case. A carpenter from Lavaur, François Macary, had suffered from very bad varicose ulcers for thirty years. He never practised his religion, and during cruel crises of suffering, when his wife prayed, he blasphemed horribly. Just about the time when he had tried to distract himself by reading Lasserre's book, he happened to meet a priest belonging to the parish who was going to Lourdes, and who came to ask if there were any commissions for him. Macary, like others, begged him to bring him a bottle of Lourdes water. Having obtained the water, he said that a religious act should be religiously performed; and, in spite of his want of piety, he

people have been cured far from the Grotto and the manifestations which take place there. They have been cured alone in their rooms, and when no religious emotion was swaying them, often when they never thought of being cured, and sometimes even when they were thinking of nothing, during the inertia of sleep.

. . . . . .

Evidently such cases are beyond explanation by therapeutic suggestion. But we will go further. We will even assert that there is no suggestion at Lourdes at all, not in any single individual case even.

This was once said to me by a certain hypnotiser who was assisting at the religious exercises of the pilgrims out of pure curiosity, before several doctors who were surprised at the remark.[1]

And he was quite right in saying that "the priests who make the religious invocations responded to by the crowd pray instead of commanding. This is not the way to hypnotise." To hypnotise a subject, a clear and categorical assurance is needed and an authoritative manner.

The priests of Lourdes have no such assurance.

made a short prayer, gently washed his sores, and fell asleep. About midnight he woke up without any sensation of pain. "I am cured!" he called out to his wife, who was occupying an adjoining room. "You are going mad!" she replied; "be quiet, and go to sleep." Neither took the trouble to get up to see if the sick man's impression was true; only in the morning did they see that everything had disappeared. "The skin on my leg was as supple," said Macary, "as that on my hands." This miracle converted him, and he became a Christian man again.—*Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. iv. p. 111.

These are examples where no one could possibly find any religious suggestion. Where is the hopeful exaltation or certain faith in a cure?

[1] See Appendix, Note 26, p. 556, Fr. ed.

They absolutely ignore even the rudiments of psychotherapeutics, as my interlocutor could well see for himself. There is nothing done in any way to effect suggestion.

It may be said that the sick people, themselves excited by their environment, hypnotise themselves —"practise auto-suggestion" without knowing it. Even were this true, it could not explain all that happens, for, as we have proved, psychical therapeutics is powerless to produce such effects.

But in reality auto-suggestion does not take place at the Grotto. This is a very important observation which we must prove.

Therapeutic suggestion consists essentially in the absolute persuasion, which comes from without or from self, that such an organic trouble, such a pain or functional disturbance, does not exist. Indeed, hypnotisers pretend that "every cerebral cell, occupied by an idea, acts on the nervous fibres which realise this idea."[1]

Should the patient hesitate to believe, all effect is impossible, and there is no longer suggestion. Whilst, on the contrary, the greater the confidence, the more probable the result.

On these principles, specialists in psychotherapeutics believe there exists in religious faith a therapeutic power superior to any other. Why? Because, say they, religious faith is blind, it is its very nature, and the persuasion which results therefrom is easily profound, entire, and absolute.[2]

[1] Bernheim, *Hypnotisme*, &c., p. 32.

[2] Here are Bernheim's own words: "Faith works miracles, because faith is blind, because it does not reason, because it does away with freedom, and works on the imagination."

This argument is based on confusion and error. Those who argue thus are absolutely ignorant of the nature of this Christian faith on which they talk so glibly. They even mistake the meanings of the terms they use.

When we speak of the *faith* of the sick in their cure, they take the word as meaning *confidence.* True faith, faith which is a *theological virtue,* is quite another matter; it is a humble and sincere adherence to the religious truths which God has been pleased to reveal to the world.

This, then, is that faith which is *blind,* if we may borrow the term wrongly employed by our opponents. The faith which is true faith is based on reason, in the sense that reason shows that God has revealed certain things to mankind, and that mankind must believe in His infallible word.

But in making this same act of belief, the mind does not reason. It believes because God has spoken, and because He cannot err, or lie, and because the doctrine which He has revealed is conformable to the natural intelligence of the mind.

As to the confidence one may have of obtaining an exceptional favour from heaven, it is not, and should not be blind. God *can* cure me, *if He so wills.* That is all faith tells me! Does He so will? Faith can tell me nothing on this subject; therefore, it cannot have *any influence* over any confidence, over any persuasion that I shall be cured.

On the contrary, if this confidence were too absolute, my faith would intervene to oppose it. Faith would tell me I was singularly presumptuous to expect a privilege which God owes no man, and to me least of all.

Therefore no one has the right to say, as it is said, that the religious character of my persuasion, or rather of my hope, gives it a force which nothing human could give it.

Rather does religion maintain this hope within the limits of simple hope tempered by resignation to the will of God, which is accepted humbly in advance, whether God wills or not to cure me. This is very far removed from a definite assurance, rendered absolute by religion; from that *faith, essentially blind in character, in the certainty of being cured!* One could hardly be more mistaken.

There is no need to object that at Lourdes suggestion works under superior conditions, such as are found nowhere else; it works, on the contrary, under much less favourable conditions, or rather it does not work at all. The singing, the candles, the banners, the eager and supplicant crowd, are as nothing. To be hypnotised, as I have said, persuasion is necessary. There is no suggestion outside persuasion. This is not denied by any who know their subject and are interested in it. They admit it as an essential and fundamental principle.

If you wish to cure a pain—if you can—persuade the patient that he has no pain, or that he will have no pain. If he hesitates to believe it, or if he doubts in any way, there is no suggestion and consequently no cure. Once again I repeat, this is the first and principal law of mental therapeutics.

Well, the sick who come to seek health at the Grotto are not sure of finding it. Their religion only gives them hope, and that a hope which is subordinate to the impenetrable designs of God, and which is therefore always uncertain. Religion

publicly repeats (conformably to the doctrine stated above), in their presence and in their name, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst heal me."

It was on hearing these words that the clever man, to whom I alluded just now, said in astonishment: "I thought there was suggestion here, but there is none."

Neither was there![1]

. . . . . .

Suggestive therapeutics, then, cannot explain the marvellous cures which take place near the rocks at Massabieille. Let us sum up in a few words what we have so lengthily explained.

The *nature* of the results obtained far surpass the power attributed to suggestion.

Moreover, their *mode* of accomplishment is not at all conformable to the methods of suggestion. Suggestion works slowly and by degrees, and only within narrow limits, but the mysterious cause which acts at Lourdes produces wonderful effects with lightning-like rapidity.

But why speak of suggestion? Even if the marvellous nature of the results and the instantaneous manner in which they happen, were not far beyond the bounds of suggestion, it could not be taken as the true cause of the Lourdes phenomena, for suggestion is not employed at Lourdes.

For these several reasons the explanation of the Lourdes cures is not to be sought in a method of healing which is, moreover, of an uncertain character. One reason would suffice, but together they make a formidable whole which must strike all honest minds who honestly seek the truth.

[1] See Appendix, Note 27, p. 556, Fr. ed.

Unknown Forces

We now reach the last resource of our adversaries. The man who no longer knows what to reply to others and to himself, and yet is determined not to acknowledge supernatural causes, takes refuge under the convenient shelter of unknown forces.

One day I was present at a little contest where the vanquished man ended by having recourse to this strategy. I will relate the scene, for it is instructive.

A doctor who was not exclusively engaged in medicine, and a theologian who was not exclusively occupied with theology, happened to meet at Lourdes. It was on the banks of the Gave, near the Grotto, in the beautiful avenue of Carolina poplars which borders the stream.

To the right the foaming stream rushes over great boulders, whilst to the left rises the wooded hill, where firs, plane trees, chestnut and lime trees grow in confusion, and amongst them all, in the spring-time, the acacia, which sheds its white flowers like sweet-smelling snow.

"Since you wish to have a chat, shall we sit here?" said the theologian, approaching a seat near the Gave.

And being of a literary turn, he added: "Perhaps you remember, in one of Plato's dialogues, that the speakers sat down comfortably under the shadow of the plane trees."

They sat down, therefore, and the conversation began. It naturally turned on the prodigies which were happening so frequently on every side. The doctor did not deny them, but he interpreted them in his own way.

However, he soon gave up trying to explain them by virtue of the cold water, for cold water works no miracles, as he well knew, and many sick people are cured without even entering the piscinas.

Gradually he yielded therapeutic suggestion, about which he happened to know very little, and whose effects he, like many of his brother doctors, had consequently much exaggerated.

Finally, at his wits' end, he brought forward the argument of unknown forces, and here is, as nearly as possible, the conversation that took place.

Doctor—"After all is said and done, M. l'Abbé, what proves to you that natural forces, as yet unknown, do not work the extraordinary cures which you attribute directly to God?"

Theologian—"And to you, doctor, what proves the existence of these natural forces as yet unknown?"

Doctor—"Oh! Nothing, certainly. It is only a theory."

Theologian—"Yes, but a bad one, a gratuitous theory, one not to be depended on—a theory which does not rest on any kind of foundation, and has no excuse unless it be the necessity to remain true to your determination to deny a miracle. But the determination is not justifiable, my dear doctor. If you had not already formed your opinion in advance, I am sure you would never have thought of this airy theory, as fragile as one of those soap bubbles which are swollen out by the breath of a child."

Doctor—"Perhaps. But even if my theory be gratuitous, what is there reprehensible about it?"

Theologian—"First, the mere fact of its being gratuitous, and then its authorising the wildest dreams of an overwrought imagination. For, allow

me to talk nonsense for a minute, doctor: what would you say if I told you I believed that in another century men would be as tall as the Eiffel Tower?"

Doctor—"I should say that you were joking. You have only to consult a biologist, my dear M. l'Abbé, to be told you that the human embryo is incapable of such gigantic development."

Theologian—"And I should reply: It is incapable of so developing according to actual laws. But I know a doctor, a friend of mine, an amiable and otherwise intelligent man, who believes in unknown laws, as soon as it is a question of facts that actual laws would oblige him to regard as miraculous, and thus to forego some fond but false opinion. If he has the right to establish a gratuitous hypothesis in favour of his prejudice, so have I, so have we all. Existing laws forbid us to believe in these unheard-of developments of our organism. But unknown forces! O biologist! These unknown forces! Those mysterious laws to be discovered in a far and distant future! Who could have foretold a century ago that we should be able to hear in Paris the voice of a friend at Marseilles? Who could have foretold? . . ."

Doctor—"I know the rest. It's old and worn out; I have used it myself many times."

Theologian—"But that is just why I use it; I use your weapons, I borrow your arguments, just to prove to you that they lead to absurdity. I beg your pardon, doctor, the word escaped me, but the idea is so true that you will, I am sure, excuse the one because of the other."

Doctor—"But pray—go on."

Theologian—"Well, supposing, for the sake of argument, that you saw a dead tree ooze blood under the axe, or a stone growing leaves and flowers. If now some one told you that this was perfectly natural, and that one day hidden forces of nature would be discovered in virtue whereof a stone might become a tree and a tree an animal?"

Doctor—"Oh! I should think he was pulling my leg, and should request him to desist."

Theologian—"And rightly too. But still he would be merely stating a gratuitous hypothesis, contrary to all known laws, exactly as you are doing. Believe me, doctor, when a principle leads logically to such absurdities it stands condemned."

Doctor—"You are somewhat severe, all the same, for I hold that much is to be allowed to avoid recognising the supernatural which offends both reason and science."

Theologian—"Doctor, now you have betrayed yourself. What! you would rather admit inadmissible things, even absurdities, than admit a miracle? But surely you ought to except, surely you do except, what is absurd.

"As for reason and science, of which you seem so proud, it is I who am defending them now—you are deserting their cause. For, in presence of the problem presented by the facts, I act as a mathematician with an equation: I believe human reason capable of finding the solution, and I therefore seek it. Whilst you, on the other hand, judge that human intelligence is not equal to the task. Like a child discouraged by a difficult sum, you say, 'The answer is somewhere, but I cannot find it out.' I am not going to try either, but shall just

trust to luck. You could not proceed in a less scientific manner. Say, if you will, that my solution is wrong, and prove it so by your own. Or admit that human reason has more to expect from my efforts than from your inactivity, and do not pose as its champion. Moreover, if it were true that new and unknown laws may one day supersede the laws known to us, the present laws would be laws no longer, and consequently science, which is based on them, would not be worth a snap of the fingers. And as for poor human reason, having so long accepted errors as certain truths, it could no longer be deemed capable of distinguishing right from wrong—indeed, to admit that, it would have little to be proud of.

"Reason and science would thus have to be sacrificed. An impossible conclusion, my dear doctor, and one that proves the falsity of your hypothesis."

Doctor—"I agree with you on this point, still we cannot deny, either you or I, that human intelligence does discover the most unexpected new laws from time to time."

Theologian—"Ah, you are going back on to the old track—steam, telegraphy, telephony. . . . I thought you did not want to mention these again.

"Well, but just notice, doctor, that these so-called new laws are often but new applications of very old laws. And when such new laws are discovered, they are always in harmony with the old, never in opposition. The whole of observed facts and the conditions of their production—*i.e.* laws which are actually laws—have nothing to fear from the discoveries of the future.

"For nature cannot contradict herself; she would

carry in her bowels the germs of destruction and death if any of her laws, as yet unknown, could reverse any known existing law. From this point of view there is concordance between the past and the future, not opposition. Nature is not at war with herself. A stone has not life, nor can it give life! This is an established fact. You may be quite certain that nothing will happen to disprove it, however long the world may last."

Doctor—"And you conclude that . . ."

Theologian—"And you conclude that if a natural law, clearly proved since the beginning of the world, as, for instance, that a disease is not suddenly cured, that if wounded or rotten tissues do not heal in a moment, we may be quite sure that there is no law to upset this fact in the reserve of hidden laws which have yet to be discovered.[1]

"And I also add that . . ."

Doctor—"What! you have another reason to bring forward. I must admit that I am on the point of yielding to your arguments."

Theologian—"But let me just make one other observation to which I attach great importance."

Doctor—"Oh, certainly, M. l'Abbé, go on—I beg of you."

Theologian—"Well, doctor, you admit that there are no unknown laws which could upset the certain laws which we know of—that's understood.

"But supposing, for the sake of argument, that such a law did exist, why should we alone benefit by it? We ignore it as much as the rest of the world, and we know nothing about the conditions necessary to its action."

[1] See Appendix, Note 28, p, 557, Fr. ed.

Doctor—"Please explain what you mean; that sounds very interesting."

Theologian—"I say this: I do not see why the pilgrims to Lourdes should alone have the privilege of profiting by these blessed unknown laws which suddenly give back health and strength, without the slightest remedy, to the sick and dying.

"These laws, if they existed, would be equally known by all classes of humanity. The pilgrims know no more than others; why do they alone reap the benefit?

"For example, the Blessed Sacrament is carried before a double row of sick. Put on one side religious emotion and any idea of suggestion, what remains? A simple promenade along the stretchers of the sick. What then? What attendant circumstances do provoke the action of this unknown law suddenly rendering health to those who have lost it? Again, why do not the rest of the world place themselves in the same conditions and reap the same benefits?

"Do you understand me?"

Doctor—"Perfectly. I cannot even find a loophole of escape."

Theologian—"Good! We shall end by agreeing. Still allow me to continue a little longer.

"I was saying, then, Why should the Lourdes pilgrims be the only ones to profit by this pretended unknown law which instantaneously restores life to the dying?

"The only possible reason would be that they alone knew the indispensable conditions for action. But whence would they obtain this extraordinary knowledge? Why! they come from all parts of the

world. They have never met before, and yet you would maintain that each group, nay, even separate pilgrims, had the happiness of unwillingly and instinctively possessing this hidden and precious knowledge.

"There can be no question of chance or luck. For, if experience were limited to one single case, we might believe that the magical button which moved the mysterious mechanism had been pressed by chance. But this is not so. The facts are multiplied, which would mean that the Lourdes pilgrims are in the know. In this case the rest of mankind must be a set of simpletons not to be able to find out their secret."

Doctor—"Indeed, all that you say seems most just. You have opened up an entirely new point of view."

Theologian—"If I have done so, it is because I myself find that point of view irrefutable.

"You see, doctor, the influence of unknown forces must go, in company with that of suggestion and cold water. It explains nothing. No, there is no natural cause, known or unknown, which can account for the marvellous events taking place here.

"All these facts are voices which tell of God and His power. They come from Him, and proclaim His existence."

Doctor—"My dear M. l'Abbé, I quite agree with you in every respect. Why discuss the matter any further? You have opened my eyes."

Theologian—"I am delighted. Your defeat is more honourable to you than my victory to me. My part has been merely to sow the seed, your sincere and noble heart has been the furrow which has fertilised it."

Miracles and Medical Men

Unfortunately all doctors are not like the one I have just mentioned.

It is sometimes said: Since human infirmities are thus cured by the Immaculate Virgin, all that takes place in her sanctuary must particularly interest medical men. What, then, is their attitude with regard to the Lourdes miracles?

They do not all behave in the same way.

First, there are prejudiced men, absolutely determined to deny the supernatural, whatever they may see or learn. Their obstinate denial does not so much come from the doctor, as from the philosopher—if the latter term be not too good for free-thinkers, who are often weak thinkers.

Their philosophy unites them like prisoners in a chain-gang. When brought face to face with a marvellous fact, they either ignore it altogether or act on fixed prejudices. Hence, from a scientific point of view, their position is vastly inferior to that of a believer, who examines the Lourdes phenomena with entire open-mindedness.

For the believer's faith does not in the least oblige him to look upon the cure as supernatural. He may pursue his inquiry without bias and accept the conclusions, whatever they may be, with a loyal adherence to truth. He has no need, like others, to contort them violently, to make them fit in with a preconceived idea, which every contrary solution would condemn. In a word, he is absolutely open-minded, whilst the rationalist is not.

What, then, happens among these free-thinking

medical men? Some refuse to examine the Lourdes phenomena in spite of their especial, perhaps unique, interest from a medical point of view. Others, who cannot resist looking into the matter, do so without sincerity. They may even refuse to give a certificate of cure after a pilgrimage, or they may, when writing a preliminary certificate, word it so vaguely, that the patient can make no use of it if he is cured.

One day, a girl arrived at Lourdes with a medical certificate, stating that she was consumptive. After a first bath in the piscina she felt cured. Examined at the Medical Office, it was found that there was no longer any lung disease. The evil no longer existed, if it had existed at all.

The certificate which stated its existence was short, but to the point. From motives of prudence the doctor was wired to, to obtain a distinct and certain diagnosis. Nothing was mentioned of the cure which had taken place. The doctor telegraphed back, "She is consumptive."

It became known later that this was also the opinion of other doctors who had attended the patient. Meanwhile, the girl returned joyfully home, and immediately went to the doctor to obtain a certificate of her cure. He gave her one, but very unwillingly. When she read it she found that he declared her to be cured, but cured of a *cold*.[1]

The phthisis, certified to in the previous certificate, and in the telegram, had developed into a cold! The free-thinker had overruled the doctor and made him lie.

[1] See Boissarie, *Lourdes*, pp. 127, 128.

Another category of doctors is not so prejudiced against the supernatural, but, miracles not being the fashion among them, they carefully avoid giving an opinion, or, if they do make a statement, they do so in a manner which could not commit them in any way.

Finally, there are—we are glad to say—doctors who do not hesitate, whatever their beliefs, to proclaim a cure when one is effected. We could give four or five hundred of such loyal attestations, with congratulations to those who signed them, were it not that it is, after all, a duty to tell the truth when called upon to give evidence.[1]

Many were not content with certifying a return to perfect health, but had the courage to declare that the cure was beyond scientific explanation, and that it could only be attributed directly to Divine interference.

In more than a quarter of these certificates this is clearly stated. Among the doctors who have publicly declared in favour of miracles, on the strength of actual facts, scientifically verified by themselves, we find:—Three surgeons from the Paris hospitals, one a member, and another an associate, of the Academy of Medicine; two professors, associates of the Medical Faculty; three head hospital doctors, one, an Italian hospital doctor; a professor of a Medical School; six directors or ex-directors of clinical research, and many former house-surgeons of the Paris hospitals.

To conclude, we quote some of these witnesses: Dr. Chrestien, professor and associate of the Faculty at Montpellier, published in 1872, in the *Union*

[1] See Appendix, Note 14, p. 475, Fr. ed.

Nationale, a long account of the cure of Mlle. Marie Louise Delpon. His final words breathe forth true French sentiment:—

"Why should I not bear witness to this miraculous cure, and brave the raillery of certain strong or weak-minded people?

"Do your duty, come what may.

"CHRESTIEN,

"Professor Associate of the Medical Faculty."

One can hardly imagine what the "strong-minded" people of Montpellier could reply to this courageous judgment of a man whose competence was above cavil.

Some ten years later, on July 9, 1883, on the occasion of the instantaneous cure of Mlle. Lucie Faure from congenital disease of both hip joints, her physician, Dr. Lagasse, thus concluded a precise and detailed certificate:—

"Neither the ordinary man, nor the scholar of good faith, can explain so extraordinary a thing by natural means. A mysterious and supernatural interference was necessary for its accomplishment. The fact existed, it still exists, it is daily visible to the whole world. I do not wish to deny the evidence. I see, I believe."

The cry of a sincere soul could not be better expressed: "*I see, I believe.*"

We have already seen the frank statement made by Dr Arnould. Having examined Mme. Champs, before and after her cure, he wrote to one of his friends: "To-day I have experienced a real miracle." And he did not hesitate to attribute the miraculous

event "to the most powerful intervention of the Blessed Virgin."

Two well-known doctors have aptly summed up the miraculous events of the Grotto. We give the words of one of Charcot's pupils, Dr. Constantine James, from a remarkable essay published in the *Paris Journal*:—

"I visited Lourdes in the same spirit of observation and reserve as I did other watering-places. To say nothing of my personal experiences — I mean such as were directly connected with my own clientèle—I affirm that I saw sick people who were cured after my colleagues and myself had declared their condition to be quite beyond the remedies of 'nature or science.'

"Besides, it is sufficient to glance over the list of cures published and authenticated, to see that, among their number, many deserve the title of miracles."

In conclusion, let us recall the beautiful words of Dr. Vergez, aggregate Professor of the Faculty of Medicine at Montpellier, who studied most closely the history of miraculous cures.

In September 1886, realising that his days were drawing to a close, and that his mission was at an end, he summed up his impressions of twenty-five years in a letter which is like his testament. It runs as follows:—

"I am asked what I saw at Lourdes. Two words suffice to tell what I saw. In examining the most authenticated facts placed above all power of science or art, I saw, I touched, Divine operation—the miraculous. I saw natural water, endowed with a contingent (*i.e.* free) force, superior to any natural force, and with absolute diversity of action. I saw

this water, which was invariably the same, produce very varied supernatural results that had no analogy whatever between them.

"To snatch a child from death's agony; to restore sight to an eye insensible to the rays of light, because of profound traumatic lesion, to render the power of motion to paralysed limbs, to cure a chronic spreading ulcer, such were its first operations, whilst those which followed were neither less astonishing nor less conclusive. Some removed maladies regarded as incurable, such as phthisis in its last stage, cancer, locomotor-ataxy. The harvest has been plentiful and of long duration. It still continues; miracles are permanently established at Lourdes."

Dr. Vergez thus sums up, strikingly and briefly, the history of the extraordinary events which take place at Lourdes, at the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin.

CHAPTER II

SOME TYPICAL CASES

Pierre de Rudder—A Novelist on Miracles—Mme. Rouchel—Gabriel Gargam.

I

PIERRE DE RUDDER

In 1875, on the verge of a forest belonging to the Viscount du Bus de Gisignies, there lived, at Jabbeke, an unfortunate field labourer who excited the pity of the whole neighbourhood.

He inhabited a humble cottage with his wife and two children, a little boy of three and a girl of fifteen. His name was Pierre de Rudder. The Viscount gave him all the necessities of life, and let him live on his estate, for the poor man was incapable of earning a livelihood. One of his legs had been broken in an accident some eight years previously. The result had been two open and suppurating sores which had become gangrenous.

On February 16, 1867, he met two wood-cutters, the brothers Knockaert, who were felling trees in the neighbourhood of the castle. A tree had by mischance fallen into a neighbouring field. The two young men were trying to lever it back to the other side. Noticing the difficulty they were in, De Rudder offered to help them. His help was gladly accepted, and he set himself the task of lopping the branches off a bush which was in the way.

Just at this moment the raised tree fell back on to him, and the trunk crushed his left leg. M. du Bus immediately sent for Dr. Affenaer of Oudenbourg. He found the bones of the leg fractured; both the tibia and the fibula were broken at a little distance below the knee.

To keep the bones in place, and in order to reunite them, the doctor bound the limb in a starched bandage. A few weeks later, however, the patient, who suffered cruelly, decided to have the bandages undone. It was then found that fresh complications had arisen. The broken ends were deprived of their periosteum, and were swimming in matter, for a gangrenous sore had formed communicating with the seat of the fracture. At the same time, another large and purulent ulceration had formed at the back of the foot.

Thus not only had the bones not begun to heal, but the muscular tissues were in a dreadful condition. After long months of careful attendance, Dr. Affenaer quite despaired of a cure. It was particularly difficult to alleviate the suppuration, for Lister's antiseptic methods were as yet hardly known.

. . . . . .

Never are so many doctors called in as when medicine is obviously powerless. De Rudder saw many doctors, who all declared his broken limb incurable. Among these were Dr. Jacques and Dr. Verriest from Bruges, another from Varssenaere, and Dr. van Hoestenberghe from Stalhille.

Finally, the Viscount du Bus wished to consult Professor Thiriart of Brussels. This was done, with the result that the amputation of the leg was

declared necessary. But De Rudder refused to have recourse to this extreme measure. He was therefore bedridden for a whole year, and suffered the most terrible agony. When he rose, it was only to walk with the aid of crutches, for he could not bear to put his bad leg to the ground. He washed his wounds two or three times every day, and bound up the broken limb, which caused him the most cruel torture, with linen bandages.

This dreadful condition lasted for eight years and two months. One day De Rudder (April 5, 1875) presented himself at the Château de Jabbeke to ask permission from the Viscount to make a pilgrimage to the Lourdes sanctuary at Oostacker, near Ghent. This Grotto, much venerated by the Belgians, is modelled on that at Lourdes.

On this very day (April 5th), a charming young lady, who was the Viscount's cousin and intended wife, happened to be at the château. The Viscountess du Bus came to Lourdes in September 1904, and she then related what happened at this time.

"De Rudder had long wished to go to Oostacker," she said, "but as long as my uncle lived he refused him permission. My uncle was very liberal in his views, and he did not believe in the possibility of a miracle.[1] So he told De Rudder that he should be attended by as many doctors as he liked, but that he did not wish to make himself ridiculous by allowing him to go on a pilgrimage. After my uncle's death, my husband willingly permitted De Rudder to do what he wished."[2]

The young Viscount did not indeed expect that

[1] In Belgium *liberals* are the party opposed to Catholics.

[2] See *Le Journal de la Grotte*, September 25, 1904.

the unfortunate man would be cured, but he would not deprive him of any little consolation he might derive from the pilgrimage. The day of departure was fixed for April 7th.

. . . . . .

To appreciate what followed, it is necessary to know exactly the condition of the sick man at this time.

Dr. Affenaer had taken away a piece of fractured bone which had got lodged in the tissues.[1]

The result was that the ends of the broken bones were some distance apart. About January Dr. van Hoestenberghe had been to see the patient. At the inquiry which was held later he said :—

"Rudder had a wound on the upper part of the leg; at the bottom of this open wound could be seen the two ends of bones about an inch apart. There was not the slightest appearance of cicatrisation. Pierre suffered very much, and had endured his broken leg for eight years.

"The lower part of the leg could be turned in any direction. The heel could be lifted so as practically to fold the leg in half. The foot could be twisted until the heel was in front and the toes at the back.

"All these movements were only limited by the resistance of the muscular tissues. Considering the condition in which the leg was when I saw it, I affirm that it could not possibly, under any conditions whatever, have completely healed in the time between my visit and the pilgrimage."[2]

As a matter of fact his condition became no

[1] In surgery this is termed a sequestrum.

[2] See *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxvi. pp. 54, 55.

better, as we shall see. Many competent witnesses saw De Rudder in the time that elapsed between Dr. van Hoestenberghe's visit and his pilgrimage. Dr. Verriest examined the patient shortly after, and found him in the state that his colleague describes.

Later again, only nine days before the pilgrimage, Jean Houtsaeghe, a cooper at Stalhille, near Jabbeke, saw De Rudder's leg.

"What did you see?" he was asked at the inquiry.

"I saw," he replied, "a sore as large as the palm of my hand."

"Were the bandages soiled?"

"Yes, with a bleeding matter which smelled very bad."

"Were you able to ascertain that the leg was broken?"

"Yes, Pierre folded the leg himself in a way that caused the *two extremities of the broken bone to project outside.*"

"Were the two extremities rounded?"

"No, they were not, they were jagged like a broken object would be. Pierre showed me how he could turn his heel in front and the toes behind. He had also a large wound on the back of the foot."

On Sunday, April 4th, a farmer at Jabbeke, Louis Knockaert by name, received a visit from De Rudder, and also saw what Houtsaeghe had seen.[1]

. . . . . .

It was on the morrow, April 5th, that De Rudder went to see M. du Bus. There the future Viscountess saw him herself, and has been able to describe the horrible malady from which he suffered.

[1] See Appendix, Note 15, p. 519, Fr. ed.

"I was at the Château of Jabbeke," she relates, "when De Rudder came on his crutches. He used to come pretty frequently to the château to see the Viscount Christian du Bus de Gisignies. Moved by curiosity, I wanted to see De Rudder's leg. He took off the linen bandages, which were saturated with pus and blood. The odour was insupportable. The last folds of the bandage were stuck to the wound, and could not be easily detached. At this sight I instinctively recoiled."

On the evening of the same day a neighbour of the sick man, Marie Wittizacle, helped De Rudder to dress his wound, and she also saw the broken bones.

She saw them again on the following day, the eve of the pilgrimage, in company with another neighbour, Van Hooren, and his son Jules van Hooren, who, with herself, spent two hours with Pierre de Rudder.

These three signed the following declaration:—

"The undersigned declare that they saw, on April 6th, 1875, the fractured leg of De Rudder: the two parts of the broken bone pierced the flesh, and were separated by a suppurating wound an inch long.

"(Signed) JULES VAN HOOREN, EDOUARD VAN HOOREN, MARIE WITTIZACLE.

"JABBEKE, *April 25th*, 1875."

During the inquiry, Edouard van Hooren was asked:

"Did you sign this certificate?"

"Yes, we signed this certificate."

"Do you know what you signed?"

"Yes, yes, certainly."

"Was it actually the day before the pilgrimage that you saw De Rudder?"

"Yes, the day before, in the evening. I was at his home with my son and Marie Wittizacle."

"What did you see?"

"Pierre uncovered his leg to dress it, and *he folded the leg so as to show us the two ends of the broken bone.*"

"The bones were not united?"

"No; it was just as I had always seen it before—the leg could be turned and twisted in any direction."

Such was the sick man's condition on the evening of April 6th. The next morning he departed before dawn. The same faithful neighbour, Van Hooren, was up to bid him God-speed. After a few minutes' chat, Pierre de Rudder set out with his wife.

A great and memorable day dawned for him. It was four o'clock, and still dark, and Pierre's heart rejoiced as the first streaks of light shot across the sky, and nature awoke on this lovely spring morning.

But the way was long and difficult. Leaning on his crutches, and helped by his wife, the poor man took more than two hours to go to the station, one and a half miles distant.

He rested, while waiting for the train, in the gatekeeper's little cottage near the station.

When the time came to start, Pierre Blomme, the gatekeeper, aided by two or three good-natured men, carried him to a carriage. Seeing his leg twisting about, Blomme could not refrain from asking: "But what are you going to do at Oos-

tacker with such a leg as that? You had much better stay at home."

To which De Rudder replied: "Others have been cured at Oostacker; why not I?" Whereupon the train arrived, and the patient was lifted into a compartment.

They were to get out at Ghent. During a portion of the journey, as far as Bruges, De Rudder and his wife had as travelling companions Jean Duclos and his mother, who also were witnesses of the dreadful wound which so many others had already seen.

At Ghent they had to get into an omnibus for Oostacker. The driver, a strong big fellow, took Pierre down when he reached his destination. He noticed the leg twisting about in the most extraordinary manner.

"Look!" he called to those who were watching, "here's a man losing his leg!"

But when he came to look inside the omnibus, he joked no longer, for the floor was soiled with blood and matter. He gave full vent to his annoyance before Mme. de Rudder, who remained speechless.

. . . . . .

At length the patient reached the Grotto of his hopes and longing. As he sat before the statue, the passing pilgrims came in contact with his poor leg, causing it to oscillate, which made him suffer dreadfully. But those sufferings were to be his last.

We have seen the condition of De Rudder's leg up to the present moment. It was quite incurable by human means.

Now was the time for Providence to intervene.

On his arrival, De Rudder rested a little; then, having drunk some of the water, he went round the Grotto twice. He tried to go a third time, but he was too exhausted and overcome with fatigue. He sat down therefore on one of the benches, before the statue of the Blessed Virgin.

What was his prayer? He often spoke of it afterwards, especially to Mme. la Viscomtesse du Bus. He began by asking pardon for his sins; then he begged of Our Lady of Lourdes the grace to be able to earn a livelihood for his wife and children, so as not to be obliged to live on charity.

His whole being was convulsed by I know not what revolution. He was upset, shaken, agitated, and quite outside himself. Hardly knowing what he was doing, and quite forgetting his crutches, his constant companions for the last eight years, he got up without help, passed through the ranks of pilgrims, and knelt down immediately in front of the statue.

Suddenly his presence of mind returned, and he realised that he had walked and was on his knees.

"I on my knees!" he cried. "Where am I?—O my God!"

He immediately got up, radiant and excited, and began devoutly to go round the Grotto.

"Whatever has happened? what are you doing?" cried his wife, seeing him walking. Then suddenly she realised, and fainted.

The pilgrims crowded round De Rudder, and plied him with questions. He could stand straight up, he could walk. His two legs stood firmly on the ground, and bore him easily and painlessly. His troubles were over—he was cured! Alleluia!

PIERRE DE RUDDER, AFTER HIS CURE

The two bones of the left leg which had been broken for eight years were united instantaneously

A few minutes after De Rudder and his wife were at the château of Mme. la Marquise Alph. de Courtebourne, accompanied by many of the pilgrims.

The limb which had so long been ailing was examined. With astonishment and emotion, it was discovered that the leg and the foot, both much swollen a few instants previously, had *regained their normal size*—so much so, that the plaster and the bandages had fallen down of themselves. The two wounds were healed, and, wonder of wonders, the two broken *bones were reunited* in spite of the distance which separated them! They were firmly fixed together, and the *two legs were alike in every respect.*

"Since that time," asked the doctor who held an inquiry later, "have you been able to walk without crutches?"

"Yes, as much as I have wanted to."

. . . . . .

In spite of the tenderness of his foot, so long unaccustomed to pressure, Pierre de Rudder did not spare himself in the least.

On leaving the château of the Marquise de Courtebourne, he went back to the Grotto to return thanks, and he walked round three times. Then, it being time to start home, and as the Ghent omnibus was waiting, he hurried to catch it. In the evening, when he got out of the train at Jabbeke, the gatekeeper Blomme looked at him amazed.

"Pierre was walking perfectly," he said afterwards, "and without crutches."

"Perhaps your memory is not very good," said the cross-examiner to try him, "or perhaps you are exaggerating?"

"I am quite sure of what I say," replied Blomme emphatically; "my memory is very sure, very precise, and I do not exaggerate in the least."

De Rudder caused still further astonishment on the way home, and gradually a little crowd collected.

"What's the matter?" asked cooper Houtsaeghe.

"It's De Rudder, who has come back from Oostacker cured."

"De Rudder cured! It's impossible! I know the state his leg was in. I saw it myself."

"I went closer," relates Houtsaeghe, "and I saw De Rudder in the midst of the crowd; he was walking perfectly and without crutches."

M. du Bus had gone to Brussels with his *fiancée* and his mother.

"We were at table," related the Viscountess, in September 1904, at the Lourdes Medical Office, "when, about two o'clock, we received a telegram from one of our farmers announcing the marvellous cure. On reading the wire, the Viscount was very much impressed, and he said:

"I have never believed in miracles, but if De Rudder is cured, it is really a miracle, and I shall believe."

"On the next day," continued Mme. du Bus, "on our return to the château at Jabbeke, De Rudder presented himself before the whole family, completely cured of his wound and walking very well."

When De Rudder reached his own poor cottage, his daughter Silvie embraced him sobbing. Very early in the morning the pious child had lit a candle before Our Lady's picture. Our Lady brought her

back her father walking firmly on his feet, happy and radiant.

His little boy, who had never seen his father without crutches, refused to recognise him in this man, upright and strong, who walked like every one else.

The whole village flocked together at the news. The neighbours came first to see with their own eyes what they had thought impossible, especially Van Hooren and his son, as well as Marie Wittizacle, who had seen De Rudder's leg only the evening before. A few days later they signed the following declaration:—

"We declare that De Rudder returned, on April 7th, from his pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes at Oostacker, perfectly cured. The bone was firm, the wound had disappeared; De Rudder could walk as well as he did before his accident."

This striking miracle became a public event. In the parish church a novena of sung Masses was celebrated. The church was full every day, there being as many as 1500 present out of a population of 2000. These nine days were kept like nine Sundays.

Both the religious and civil authorities, as well as all the chief people of the neighbourhood, wished to keep a sort of authenticated testimony of this marvellous event. So they compiled the following document:—

"We, the undersigned parishioners of Jabbeke, declare that the shin-bone of Pierre Jacques Rudder, native and resident of this place, aged fifty-two years, had been so fractured by the fall of a tree, on February 16th, 1869, that, every resource of surgery

having been exhausted, the patient was given up and declared incurable by the doctors, and considered as such by all who knew him; that he invoked Our Lady of Lourdes, venerated at Oostacker, and that he returned cured and without crutches, so that he can do any kind of work as before his accident. We declare that this sudden and admirable cure took place on April 7th, 1875.

Signed:—

L. Slock, priest.
Aug. Rommelaere, curate.
D'Hoedt, mayor.
Aug. Stubbe, alderman (échevin).
P. Maene, alderman.
G. Sanders, president of the Council of Church Administration.
Charles de Cloedt, member of the Municipal Council, a churchwarden.
F. Demonie, church treasurer.
T. Callewaert, clerk.
P. de Sorge.
J. de Simpel, municipal counsellor.
L. Boutin Perloot.
Viscount du Bus de Gisignies, senator.
(Municipal Seal.)

"Jabbeke, *April 15th*, 1875."

Among the signatures should be noticed that of the Senator Viscount du Bus, who, as stated above, did not believe in miracles, and that of M. P. de Sorge, a free-thinker, who, when he died, received civil interment.

These witnesses are therefore irrefutable. Moreover, their testimony is confirmed by the doctors.

Hearing that his patient had regained health, Dr. Affenaer hurriedly came from Oudenbourg early on the morning of April 8th—that is, the day after the cure.

De Rudder was not at home. Returning from church, he had stopped at M. Charles Rosseel's. It was here that the doctor found him. He examined the leg most carefully, and was particularly struck on finding the inner side of the tibia perfectly smooth at the seat of the fracture.

Several people assisted at this examination. Dr. Affenaer could not overcome his emotion, great tears dropped from his eyes, and he exclaimed:

"You are completely cured, De Rudder; your leg is like that of a new-born baby. Human remedies were powerless, but what doctors could not do the Blessed Virgin has done." [1]

On the morrow, April 9th, it was Dr. van Hoestenberghe's turn. Hearing the astonishing news, he, like Senator du Bus, refused to believe. But still he was not obstinate in the face of facts, like some people. He came expressly from Stalhille to Jabbeke personally to inquire into the matter. When he arrived, Peter was hoeing in his garden.

The doctor was thunderstruck at the sight, for he was no believer in the supernatural. He begged his old patient to go inside the house, in order that he might examine him carefully.

To prove the reality of his cure, Pierre began to jump like a boy before the astonished eyes of his visitor. However, the latter examined him thoroughly all the same.

He found a scar below the knee, another and

[1] *Annales*, vol. viii. p. 200.

larger one at the back of the foot, both tangible proofs of the disease and of its cure. He passed his finger carefully along the *inner surface* of the tibia, and verified, as his colleague had done, that this surface was quite smooth where the fracture had been. There was no shortening, no lameness. Pierre was radically and completely cured.

In face of this evident proof of Divine intervention, the loyal mind of Dr. van Hoestenberghe did not hesitate. Like the French doctor, already mentioned, he said, but in other words: "*I see, I believe.*"

. . . . . .

Nor was he the only one who had his eyes opened by this marvellous cure. There was living at Jabbeke a sceptic named De Weisch. In presence of so evident a proof of the supernatural he declared that incredulity was impossible for him, and that he must accept the teaching of the Church. Henceforward he remained an earnest believer.[1]

But the one who was the most surprised and touched was the driver of the omnibus from Ghent to Oostacker. He was a religious sceptic. When he heard, however, that the infirm man with the broken leg whom he had carried in the morning had, an hour afterwards, suddenly regained the use of his limbs, and had been completely restored to health, his scepticism vanished. He became and remained a Christian.[2]

In a word, this cure was a striking lesson in faith for the profit of many.

About twenty years later some one asked M. le Curé of Jabbeke:

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[1] *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxvi. p. 77.

[2] See *Annales*, vol. xxvi. p. 108.

"Are there any sceptics in your parish, or any who do not practise their religion?"

And the curé replied, "No, not one."

. . . . . .

Eighteen years after these events, towards the end of 1892, a Belgian doctor, whom this cure interested intensely, resolved to open an inquiry, in order that he might study the matter with absolute scientific rigour.

Nearly all the witnesses still lived, also De Rudder, who evinced a most lively gratitude to his heavenly benefactress.

"After his cure," said the Viscountess du Bus, "we kept him fifteen years as our workman. Whenever we met him he was reciting his rosary. He edified everybody.

"He was, however, a thorough worker, whose activity required moderating in spite of his advanced age. He used to return to Oostacker with a joyous assiduity which never wearied, and made as many as 400 pilgrimages in thanksgiving for his cure."

There was therefore everything to hand to make a thorough investigation, and Dr. Royer of Lens-Saint-Remy undertook the task. But he meant to do so with a severity which would not leave the slightest loophole for doubt. To this end he wrote to Dr. Mottait of Hannut, known for his uprightness and his science, but also for his scepticism, to ask his collaboration.

"*Dec.* 16, 1892.

"MOST HONOURED COLLEAGUE,—I sent you the *Annales de Lourdes* for October last, that you might read the account of De Rudder's cure.

"I wish to ask you if, in the interests of truth,

you will join with me to make a fresh inquiry, and to collect accurate information during De Rudder's lifetime.

"Your well-known convictions will be a guarantee of loyalty. For this reason two people from Huy have spoken to me on the matter, and wish to pay all the expenses of your journey.

"We will go to Jabbeke, and see the doctors who attended Rudder.

"If you are good enough to accept my proposal, we will discuss further the best means of discovering the truth.—Yours, &c., Dr. Royer."

Dr. Mottait seemed to accept at first, but having read the account of the cure, he made no further move in the matter. Consequently Dr. Royer was obliged to go to Jabbeke alone.

. . . . . .

But Providence came to his help, and sent him the collaborator he needed to guarantee the sincerity of the inquiry and its results, whatever they might be. In the train he met a worthy merchant who was going to Bruges, and therefore close to Jabbeke. A religious discussion having been started, he soon perceived that his companion was a determined sceptic.

This was the very man he wanted. On the spot, he asked him to help him. The merchant spoke both Flemish and French, and could serve as interpreter.

As he was at leisure, and was a sincere and honest man who asked for nothing better than to scrutinise so extraordinary an event, he agreed to accompany the doctor. Thus a Christian and a sceptic set out together to discover truth.

And as M. Taffeniers (such was the merchant's name) alone knew Flemish, it was he, the free-thinker, who received the depositions and who translated them for the believer.

This, then, was what happened. The evidence increased, and only served to prove the supernatural reality of the facts subjected to inquiry. The free-thinker was first touched, then shaken, and finally convinced, and he had the sincerity to acknowledge it.

This was a decided confirmation of the miracle. It may be said that no historical fact has ever been proved more accurately, more rigorously, or with a greater wealth of proofs.

Every proof seemed to have been dealt with, when De Rudder's death brought forward another.

. . . . . .

Pierre de Rudder died of pneumonia at the age of sixty-four, and twenty-three years after his cure.[1]

Dr. van Hoestenberghe, who had been converted by the miracle, wished to see the bones of the leg, and obtained permission to exhume the body. This was done on May 24, 1899. The doctor amputated the two legs at the knee joint.

Thus a post-mortem examination confirmed all the evidence already brought forward, as the reader may see for himself, if he examines the photographs given herewith. He can see that the left leg (the one on his right) shows evident traces of the double fracture, and is repaired in such a way that, in spite of the deviation of the superior portion of the bones, which were drawn backwards during eight years by the flexor muscles of the thigh, the vertical

[1] March 22, 1898.

axis of the left limb keeps the same direction as the axis of the right leg. Thus the weight of the body was equally and normally borne by both sides. Moreover, notwithstanding the elimination of an osseous fragment from the broken limb, the two limbs are of equal length.

The invisible surgeon who had deigned to intervene had done in one second what no other could have done in long years, and he had moreover done it admirably. At the same time, that none might ignore the fact, his hand had left the mark of the fracture as an evident proof of Divine operation.

. . . . . .

Five years previously, when publishing his inquiry, Dr. Royer had brought forward certain points. First, he said, that since April 7, 1875, no fibrous callus had existed, and a callus should still at this date, and long afterwards, have united and bound together the broken ends, in the case of a fracture with sores and separation of the bones. But the contrary had happened, for the bones had been joined together without this intermediary. Also, although the left leg had not been cased in splints, when cured, it was as straight as the other leg. Finally, in spite of the loss of a piece of bone, and in spite of the fact that the bones had been an inch apart before the cure, afterwards one limb was as long as the other.

And the doctor added in conclusion: "Doubt would be unreasonable. Every right-minded person must recognise supernatural intervention in this cure."

Since and after the autopsy, in 1899, Dr. Royer signed and published, with two of his colleagues, Drs. van Hoestenberghe and Deschamps, a very

important article on the De Rudder case.[1] After having related and severely tested all the facts, the three doctors prove that the cure could not *have been due to natural forces.* This conclusion is based on a scientific discussion of great clearness and irresistible force.[2]

. . . . . .

Finally, let us quote the precise declarations that one of the authors has made to Dr. Boissarie since 1892.

They will give us a rapid and authentic summing up of the principal facts we have been studying.

In a first letter, written August 21, 1892, Dr. van Hoestenberghe wrote:—

"Whilst at his work, Pierre de Rudder had a comminuted fracture of the left tibia and fibula. His leg was crushed by the trunk of a tree which fell on it. The fragments were so numerous that, in shaking the limbs, the bones could be heard rattling.

"Consolidation never took place in spite of many and the best doctors whom M. le Comte du Bus called in during six years. Condemned and given up by all, this man was in despair when I had the opportunity of examining his leg.

"It is not necessary to give a long description: the lower part of the leg, with the foot, literally swung at the end of the limb, so that I could actually twist the heel round more than once."

A little later, on September 3rd, the same doctor wrote to the president of the Medical Office:—

"When Pierre de Rudder went on pilgrimage, his

[1] *Revue des Questions scientifiques,* October 1899.

[2] See Appendix, Note 16, p. 538, Fr. ed.

leg had been broken and he had hobbled on crutches for more than eight years. The lower part of the leg and the foot hung like a rag.

"The same evening Pierre returned dancing without his crutches; he had walked several miles, delighted to take an exercise he had so long been deprived of.

"Naturally I went to see him, and, I may tell you in confidence, that I did not believe in this cure.

"What did I find? A leg so perfect that, if I had not examined it previously, I should have said it had never been broken.

"There was not the least irregularity to be felt along the line of the tibia, but a perfectly supple surface, from top to bottom. All that was to be seen were some surface scars on the skin."

As it was the year that M. Zola went to Lourdes, Dr. van Hoestenberghe said in conclusion:—

"Probably this letter will find you with M. Zola. If this be so, I should be glad for him to read it, and, if he would allow me, to say to him these few words: 'Sir, I was an unbeliever as you are; De Rudder's miracle opened my eyes, hitherto closed to the light. I still doubted sometimes, but I studied the Christian religion and prayed. Now, I can affirm, on my honour, that I believe absolutely, and that with belief I have found happiness, and an interior peace, which I had never known before.'"[1]

. . . . . .

Let these sincere words be our last. M. Zola had left Lourdes when they arrived, but they remain a striking lesson for all.

Let those who have the misfortune of being

[1] *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxvi. pp. 161, 162.

THE BONES OF PIERRE DE RUDDER'S LEGS AFTER AUTOPSY

THE MARK OF THE FRACTURE IS VISIBLE ON THE LEFT LEG

(TO THE RIGHT OF THE READER)

sceptics like Dr. van Hoestenberghe, decide to do what he did. They should consider the supernatural phenomena which take place in this world with an impartial mind, not fearing to see the truth, and resolved to remain open when truth appears.

At the same time they should beg God to send them the light of truth, that they may taste the ineffable joy of security and certainty.

When God manifests Himself, He must be gazed at to be seen; to be heard, He must be spoken to.

II

A NOVELIST ON MIRACLES

In 1892 a very well-known novelist went to Lourdes at the time of the great pilgrimages. He wished to see what was taking place, and to give his own version of it.

But he was one of those men who do not leave their interests or their fame to fate. He took every means to prepare public opinion. The papers were primed with his confidences, and the world impatiently looked forward to the book which was to air his views.

At Lourdes, every door was opened to the writer, and he was allowed to see everything. It was made a point of honour that this should be the case. Especially was he given access to the Medical Office during the consultations, a permission which is not always easily obtained during the crowded season, by one who is not a doctor. There he met many who had been cured. He questioned them at his leisure, and had several inter-

esting discussions with the doctors who were present, and many of whom were as sceptical as himself.

Nay, more. He first saw them in the pilgrims' train, that *white train* which he has so wonderfully described with his realistic pen, as fond of pain as of vice.

We give here the principal figures he tried to make re-live in his work. It will be interesting to compare truth with fiction.

CLÉMENTINE TROUVÉ

On August 20, 1892, there were assembled in the Medical Office at Lourdes, several doctors, journalists, and M. Zola.

"Suddenly," relates one of them, "there was a stir in the room—the first patient had arrived.

"Poor little thing! I pitied her from the bottom of my heart. Quite young, hardly fifteen years old, with large blue eyes, a frank and intelligent face, and fair hair that shone as a golden aureole from underneath her little blue peasant's cap.

"Her name was Clémentine Trouvé. She explained her case. It was already known, but those present wished to hear her own account. Somewhat nervously she told her tale.

"The bone of her heel was completely carious, and she was unable to walk. She told naïvely how jealous she had been of her more fortunate companions, and how she had prayed to the Blessed Virgin that she, too, might be able to put on her boots to go to Mass. The sore suppurated. . . .

"She showed her foot, which was perfectly sound, and all the doctors leant forward to assure them-

selves of the total disappearance of the wound. Just a faint red tinge, a slight depression, indicated the spot where the evil had been.

"M. Zola, who was present, bit the tip of his glove, a sign with him of mental discomfiture. The girl was in a hurry to be off. They let her go at length. She hurriedly put on her boot and stocking, and was gone like a bird, impatient to be beyond the range of all those eyes watching her every movement."

The novelist, who in his book called Clémentine Trouvé, Sophie Couteau, wrote:—

"All at once, a smiling, modest-looking, young girl, whose clear eyes sparkled with intelligence, entered the office. . . .

"'Tell the gentlemen how it happened, Sophie.'

"The little girl made her usual pretty gesture as a sign to everybody to be attentive. And then she began. 'Well, it was like this; my foot was past cure, I couldn't even go to church any more, and it had to be kept bandaged because there was always a lot of matter coming from it. M. Rivoire, the doctor, who had made a cut in it so as to see inside it, said that he should be obliged to take out a piece of the bone, and that, sure enough, would have made me lame for life. But when I got to Lourdes, and had prayed a great deal to the Blessed Virgin, I went to dip my foot in the water, wishing so much that I might be cured, that I did not even take the time to pull the bandage off. And everything remained in the water. There was no longer anything the matter with my foot when I took it out.'"[1]

[1] *Lourdes*, pp. 164, 165 (English translation).

This M. Rivoire was, in real life, Dr. Cibiel of Lusignan (Vienne), who, having long attended the little patient, gave the following certificate:—

"The undersigned doctor certifies that young Clémentine Trouvé, of Rouille, suffers from osteo-periostitis of the calcaneum, which has resisted treatment by incision and detergent injection. This disease can only be amenable to a radical operation on the part diseased, or to a long treatment based on local antiseptics and general analeptics.

"Dr. Cibiel.

"Lusignan, *June* 11, 1891."

Clémentine had reached Lourdes on August 20, 1891, with the National Pilgrimage. The next day, the 21st, her foot, which had been diseased for three years, was bathed in the piscina, and, *instantaneously*, the disease disappeared, and she was cured. There was no more suppuration, no more pain, the sore was closed, and the little girl could walk like all other children of her age. She was even able immediately to put on some boots that a lady brought for her. The sight of these boots filled her with childlike joy, and she jumped about happily when going up the stairs in the hospital.

As the journey had caused the leg to suppurate more abundantly than usual, the linen and the lint she had taken with her threatened to give way, and she said to the Viscountess de Roederer with charming ingenuity: "The Blessed Virgin was very kind to cure me on the first day, for to-morrow I should have run out of linen."

On the 22nd the news was conveyed to her doctor by M. le Curé, of the parish of Rouille.[1]

Dr. Cibiel was at Bagnole in Orne. On his return to Lusignan, eight days after, he saw his little patient, and gave her the following certificate:—

"The undersigned doctor certifies that Clémentine Trouvé, who has been suffering since June 12, 1891, from periostitic fistula, of tuberculous origin, in the sole of her foot, is at present cured, and does not show any more trace of her old affection, than some scars and a slightly increased development of the sole of the foot. He, moreover, certifies that any pressure at this point is not painful, and the little invalid can stand comfortably on the bad foot. Dr. CIBIEL.

"LUSIGNAN, *Sept.* 1, 1891."

When signing this certificate, Dr. Cibiel said to M. le Curé at Rouille: "I am giving you the certificate you desire with the same sincerity that I gave the certificate stating the disease."

"And when I asked him," relates the curé, "if he could not add that it was at Lourdes that the child was cured, he replied: 'No, you have witnesses to prove that. That is sufficient.'"

"'Besides,' he added, 'you will pardon me, M. le Curé, 'but I will say to you what I said to Mme. Trouvé, "Whether by the devil or the good God, the child is cured and well cured, and I am pleased—very pleased."'"[2]

All the inhabitants of the little village were not

[1] Rouille is a market town in Vienne and near Lusignan.

[2] *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxviii. pp. 20, 21.

so pleased. The Protestants particularly were in a very bad temper.

"When I left for Lourdes," the child related a year after at the Medical Office, every one said: 'Ah! you may go on a pilgrimage, but you will return like the others,' and they mentioned a young girl of the neighbourhood who had not been cured the year before.

"When I returned, and they saw me walking without crutches and cured, they all said, 'She was never ill.'"

. . . . . .

This tale was told by Clémentine before M. Zola, who was apparently much interested.

"But, doctor," he said at length to M. Boissarie, with the embarrassment of a man who can find nothing to say, "this is miraculous. I regret to see no professors of the Paris School here."

"I also," replied the doctor; "they have only to come—our doors are always open."

We may as well remark by the way that there were at this moment in the room a surgeon from a Paris hospital, some corresponding associates of the Academy of Medicine, several late house-surgeons, and some who were still practising in the Parisian hospitals; also doctors from many of the largest French towns, from watering-places, and from foreign faculties.[1]

"Did you see the wound yourself before the cure?" asked the novelist.

"No," replied the president; "I only saw it an hour after, when the scar was still fresh. But a

[1] The names of all these doctors are given in the Office Register.

number of people did see it—her doctor to begin with, who certainly is not a believer. You have read his certificate."

"I wish you had seen it."

"But we cannot see all the patients that arrive in Lourdes. A thousand came yesterday. How could we investigate a thousand cases in a day? Besides, we should be accused of partiality either because of public malignity or because the rapid examination of an unknown patient could hardly be absolutely safe. We always refer first to the patients' doctors, whatever their convictions. Then if a cure is effected, we make a thorough inquiry in the person's home. This seems the best and surest method, besides it is the only one possible.

"I make you an offer, M. Zola: will you take me at my word? There is a little girl who for three years suffered from a suppurating sore in the heel until August 21st last, on which day she was suddenly cured. Will you join with me in a scientific inquiry into these two facts, the disease and the cure? Do you accept?"

Thus publicly challenged, the novelist replied that he had not the time, that he was not able to indulge in such research. In a word, he excused himself, and said:

"As you did not see the wound yourself, show me something else, doctor."

The inquiry which, ostensibly, he had refused to make, was made in a somewhat surreptitious manner, either at his instigation or with his formal approbation, for the investigator boasted of having received his praises. This investigator was a Protestant minister. He went to Rouille twice, staying there

a few hours, and seeing almost only Protestants. He obtained no signatures, published no names, for his witnesses had not the courage to face the public.

Zola, then, would have us believe the evidence of people who refused to give their names, and of a determined opponent, who was at liberty to attribute what he liked to these unknown witnesses.

The investigator gives only one name among those he visited—that of Dr. Cibiel. If we can believe him, the doctor's words were in substance as follows: —

"The last time I saw the bad foot, on June 11, 1891, I was in a hurry, and did not thoroughly examine the sore. The child had been to the hospital at Lusignan twice, and come out cured twice; the radical operation of which I speak in my certificate is the scraping of the bone, with antiseptic cleansing and dressing. It would have meant treatment for some months.

"*Probably* the wound was cured at the time the child left for Lourdes, in which case a crust may have formed hiding the cure, and this crust may have fallen off in the piscina. A simple foot-bath would have had the same result."

. . . . . .

If these statements were really made, they contain inaccurate facts and gratuitous theories of which one at least is absolutely false.

First, it is inaccurate to pretend that the examination made on June 11th was a hasty one.

Were it so, it would be absolutely inexcusable on the part of a man who was ready to certify what he had not taken the trouble to examine. Not only did Dr. Cibiel examine the wound on this day, but he probed it. Mme. Trouvé held the child on her

knees during this painful process, and Mme. Sardet, in whose house it took place, held the foot, for the child was crying with pain. Moreover, there were several other persons present. The probing caused an abundant flow of blood, which made it necessary to sluice down the stone floor afterwards.

It is quite untrue to say that the child was treated twice at the Lusignan hospital, and that she was cured there twice. She only stayed there once as a matter of fact, and then ineffectually. We have the proof of this in the declaration made by the head of the hospital in 1891, three years before the supposed interview with the doctor, which took place on September 25, 1894.

. . . . . .

"I, the undersigned Superior of the hospital at Lusignan, have the honour to certify to the party concerned that little Clémentine Trouvé of Rouille, aged fourteen years, entered our house April 4, 1890, to be cured of a carious bone and a suppurating wound in the right foot. In spite of our care, and remedies applied according to the doctor's prescriptions, this child *underwent no sensible improvement* during the four months she stayed at the hospital. When the wound healed on one side, it re-opened four or five days after on the other. She returned to her family on July 27th.

"I had occasion to see this girl on August 10, 1891, and to examine her foot. Its condition *was not improved*, and the wound looked the same as it had done before.

"In testimony whereof I sign my name,

"Sœur Deléchelle.

"*Sep.* 14, 1891."

Moreover, Dr. Cibiel himself declared, in his certificate of June 11, 1891, that the disease had so far resisted treatment by incision and detergent injections, which means that the methods had failed to cure.

He wrote this at the time of the disease. If he *said* the contrary three years after, his memory must have utterly betrayed him.

. . . . . .

Such are the errors in *facts*. As to the *hypotheses*, they do not matter very much; every man, be he a doctor or no, is at liberty to play at guessing riddles if it pleases him.

But one cannot help asking why the incision and the injections are reputed to have effected in a few months what they had failed to effect during three years' treatment, as the certificate formally declares. Whence did they obtain their new virtue?

Even were this vain hope based on any vestige of truth, how is the greatness of the miracle diminished thereby?

Had it been possible for the child to be cured with proper treatment, and in time—a few months—it still remains to be explained how she was cured instantaneously and without treatment.

What passes all understanding is the inconceivable assertion about the *probable* condition of the girl on her departure for Lourdes.

What authority, may I ask, has the doctor, after uselessly torturing this little girl for three years, to think and to say that the cure *effected itself* in two months, especially as, on his own admission, he made no further examination from the day he

ascertained the gravity of her condition, and knowing that more than twenty witnesses saw the gaping wound at the time of the pilgrimage?

Dr. Cibiel cannot possibly have said what is attributed to him. His words have been distorted by those who reported them. The authentic documents signed by himself are certainly of more value than verbal statements made at a later date, and we have the right to abide by them.

. . . . . .

As to the more or less vague statements with regard to Clémentine's malady, made some years after, and without going into the matter, by anonymous Protestants, they do not balance the evidence of so many who ascertained the facts, and who were not afraid of giving their names.

Take, for instance, the declaration made by the Superior of the hospital, who examined the wound before the cure took place, and who found no alteration in its condition.

Sœur Marie Eugénie, who had the charge of the sick in the parish of Rouille, states that she tended the tuberculous wound at sundry intervals, and that she saw the same wound on the eve of her going into retreat on July 23, 1901. It looked just the same.[1]

On August 17th, when the young patient was getting ready to start with the National Pilgrimage on the following day, her condition was just the same. For on that day Mme. Paul Delaigne saw at her parents' house "the gaping wound, from which was oozing pus and blood, which soiled the linen bandages." Her mother also saw it.

[1] See the complete certificate in the *Annales*, vol. xxvii. p. 314.

She adds that Mme. Trouvé "had brought her child in a wheelbarrow, for she was unable to walk far."[1]

The wound was also seen several times during the illness by Mme. Alexandre Fouquet; two or three days before starting for Lourdes, by Mme. Boutin; the day before by Mme. Jeanne Sardet; and on the eve of departure by Mme. Honoré Neau and Ernest Jamel, as well as by Mlle. Marie Boutin.

The witnesses assert that, in their presence, the child several times stanched the suppurating hole, by packing into it, with a bodkin or knitting needle, a strip of linen two or three centimetres wide and twelve or fifteen long.

In this condition she went to Poitiers to catch one of the pilgrim trains for the miraculous Grotto. At Poitiers she was received by the lady secretary of the Association of Our Lady of Health for the Poitiers diocese—the Viscountess de Roederer.

"I saw the wound," Mme. de Roederer wrote afterwards; "for the child unbandaged it immediately on her arrival. The fatigue of the journey had increased the suppuration, and the child cried at the thought that her supply of linen would soon be exhausted. She was suffering, and I had some difficulty in consoling her. I saw the child again during the day she stayed at Poitiers, and again in the train. The suppuration was very abundant all the time."

Such, then, was the condition of the little invalid during her journey to Lourdes, a condition which a Protestant minister and a paltry few of his co-religionists, too ashamed of themselves to give their names, dared to contest three years later!

[1] See Appendix, Note 17, p. 539, Fr. ed.

We know how she was cured suddenly in the piscina, on August 21, 1891.

. . . . . .

A year later she returned to the Medical Office at Lourdes to enable the doctors to see for themselves that her heel had remained perfectly healthy, that she had had no relapse—in short, that there remained no trace of the tubercular disease which the medical certificate had declared existed.

The novelist looked at her sympathetically. He relates how she was obliged to take off her stocking. It was decided that all presents hould have the opportunity of judging for themselves.

"The little foot promptly appeared, very white, very clean, carefully tended indeed, with its scar just below the ankle, a long scar, whose whity seam testified to the gravity of the complaint. Some of the medical men had drawn near and looked on in silence. Others, whose opinions, no doubt, were already formed, did not disturb themselves, though one of them, with an air of extreme politeness, inquired why the Blessed Virgin had not made a new foot while she was about it, for this would assuredly have given her no more trouble."[1]

For his own sake, this "very polite doctor" should have held his tongue. For his question betrays his ignorance.

If, before accepting a fact and its consequences, it were necessary to reply to the series of mysterious "whys?" it might suggest, absolutely no positive knowledge could exist. We could know nothing, speak of nothing, make use of nothing; it would be impossible for us even to live.[2]

[1] *Lourdes*, pp. 165, 166 (English translation).

[2] See Appendix, Note 30, p. 562, Fr. ed.

The remark in question was wide of the mark, and is very easily disposed of.

If the miracle had effaced the "long scar, whose whity seam testified to the gravity of the complaint," M. Zola would never have seen it, nor any one else; Clémentine would not have borne the indelible proof of the cure, and the Huguenots of her native village might have boldly asserted on all sides that she had never had a suppurating wound in her heel; they might even have been tempted at some distant date to emerge from their native modesty, and to sign their evidence!

"What God does, He does well," as La Fontaine wrote in his fable "The Acorn and the Pumpkin." The fabulist ridicules Garo for his foolish questions on the behaviour of Providence, and for his boast, saying that he would have done otherwise, and better, had he been the Creator.

The race of Garos is evidently immortal.

. . . . . .

The hero of the novel, acting as the author's mouthpiece, talks very foolishly about Clémentine Trouvé's case. He is so evidently embarrassed, that he has recourse to a multitude of hypotheses, none of which answers his purpose.

He sees the girl, he hears her talk. He cannot accuse her of falsehood, and indeed does not attempt so to do.

"She certainly did not lie," he says, "but who knows if she had not slowly and unwittingly distorted the truth?"

But this suspicion does not bear scrutiny, for it was not slowly, but immediately on coming out of the piscina, that Clémentine announced that she was

cured, and she at once went to the Medical Office to have her cure officially verified. It was on the very morrow that her parish priest informed Dr. Cibiel, who himself corroborated the fact, on his return to the village eight days after. The event was, moreover, witnessed by a great number of people.

The author and the hero also remark: "Who knows if the cure was instantaneous or not? After all, no one saw the foot before and after its immersion in the piscina." [1]

This point is of vast importance in the eyes of the celebrated novelist. It is in vain that he argues about "unknown forces," for he does not really believe in them. In the Medical Office, in connection with the cure in question, and later in his book, he said:—

"Let me merely see a finger cut with a penknife, let me see it dipped in the water, and let it come out with the cut cicatrised, and I will be of your opinion."

If anything is certain, it is undoubtedly that the little invalid of Rouille was cured instantaneously. To dare to assert that no one saw the diseased foot either before or after the cure took place is really to break the bounds of common honesty.

The reader has only to recall the many witnesses we have brought forward to vouch for the disease, and the cure immediately it had taken place. The Viscountess de Roederer, for example, wrote:—

"The child was cured on August 21st, during a bath in the piscina. The wound was healed *instantaneously*. I saw Clémentine again at the Hospital of The Seven Sorrows. She was jumping upstairs several steps at a time; her joy was indescribable;

[1] *Lourdes*, pp. 70, 71.

she was trying to run, and kept repeating, 'I can run now, but I don't know how to.' The Lourdes doctors verified her cure on the *same day*. In testimony whereof I sign myself,

"DE G. V^TESSE DE ROEDERER."

. . . . . .

We give a final declaration made by the lady who bathed Clémentine, and who actually witnessed the miracle. Her name is Mme. Paul Lallier, and she came from Sens in Yonne.[1]

"On Friday, August 21, 1891," wrote Madame Lallier, "I was at Lourdes, in the children's piscina, helping to bathe the patients, with Mlle. Cornet of Paris, and several other ladies who were strangers to me. I had already bathed several children in the miraculous water when I saw Clémentine Trouvé coming towards me. I can remember perfectly well the impression she made on me, as I was struck by her innocent appearance and her pale and sickly face. She walked with difficulty, leaning on a heavy stick.

"I cannot exactly remember what became of the bandages which had bound Clémentine's foot, and which had been taken off before she was handed over to me; *I believe that she had them in her hand*, and that in the excitement of the cure they were dropped into the water, from which they were afterwards taken.

"Having said the 'Hail, Mary,' I began the prayer, 'Blessed be the holy and Immaculate Conception,' &c., but I could not finish it, for suddenly the little patient jumped up, crying out: 'Let me go—I am cured!'

"And she was cured indeed by the miraculous water of Our Lady of Lourdes. At this very moment

[1] Rue de l'Epée, No. 6.

CLÉMENTINE TROUVÉ
SOPHIE COUTEAU OF ZOLA'S NOVEL

MADAME GORDET

I saw on her right heel *a large scar which closed*, so to speak, under my very eyes; the flesh rejoined, and seemed to be reuniting itself. . . . I could not believe what I saw, and I was so upset that I could not follow Clémentine, who, delirious with joy, wanted to go at once to the Grotto to thank Our Lady and to leave her stick. My legs refused to carry me.

"A few minutes later, however, I joined my little *protégée*, who walked without the slightest difficulty, and I took her to the Medical Office, where there were several doctors."

The rest we have already told.

. . . . . .

If so many proofs are not enough even for the most incredulous and the most exacting, what more do they want? This fact is historic. It is tangible and visible to all. Innumerable witnesses who are above reproach declared that they felt and saw the scar, and many medical men confirmed their evidence.

Whatever may be our philosophical opinions, logic and common honesty demand that we should give way to such evidence.

And if it be the truth that a mere cut suddenly healed in the piscina would be sufficient to prove the presence of the miraculous, as the novelist both said and wrote, it only remains for us to ask:—

"Why should we deny it?—for the finger of God is clearly there!"

MADAME GORDET

M. Zola went to Lourdes convinced that he would find numerous typical neurotics healed by psychic influence, but he was disappointed.

It was absolutely necessary, however, for the reputation of his philosophical opinions, that a certain neurotic type should be forthcoming, so he created one, in the person of Mlle. de Guersaint, the heroine of his novel.

The author has always made it his boast that he would describe only what he saw. His readers are thus led to believe that Mlle. de Guersaint is a type commonly met with at the Grotto. But the novelist broke his promise, and sacrificed truth to fiction.

He not only describes what he never saw, but he omits to describe certain facts which he did see, and which made considerable impression on him at the time.

On the very evening that the free-thinkers of Lourdes toasted him as the champion of their cause, and that he replied to their speeches by announcing his intention "to make truth," the pilgrims from Berry arrived. One of their number, a young woman, was with difficulty assisted out of the train by the porters. She was immediately taken in a bath-chair to the Rosary Esplanade, and was witness, for the first time in her life, of the never-to-be-forgetten sight of a torch-light procession. This lady was Mme. Gordet.

. . . . . .

She was born in 1860 at Henrichemont, the capital of Cher, of a good commercial family. About twelve years previous to her visit to Lourdes, she had married a young trader, with every prospect of a happy married life before her.

But the clouds soon came to darken their horizon. The young wife had an accident which destroyed her

hopes of becoming a mother, and left her very delicate. Two years later, having hardly recovered, she was knocked down senseless by the shaft of a loaded omnibus. It was necessary to take her about in an invalid carriage for some time afterwards, so great had been the shock.

In 1884 began the long category of illnesses from which she suffered one after the other—angina, bronchitis, and a fever, which kept her indoors all one winter. Later her digestive organs were attacked —she had gastralgia and gastritis. Twice she was sent to Bourboule, another time to Pougues, and also to Vichy, but in vain.

She became a chronic invalid, whom the doctors, in despair, sent from one watering-place to another.

. . . . . .

Up till now, although brought up as Catholics, both husband and wife had been somewhat lax in the accomplishment of their religious duties. But one day Mme. Gordet entered the church of St. Louis des Français at Vichy, and knelt before a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes. She reflected on the powerlessness of man in the many troubles from which she had suffered, and she began to ask herself if it would not be better to seek help from heaven. Then, for the first time, the idea of a journey to the miraculous Grotto came into her mind.

When she returned to Henrichemont, she was told that a pilgrimage to Lourdes was being organised at Berry. She joyfully entered her name among the pilgrims, but, her mother's serious illness preventing her from going, she paid for a poor invalid to go in her place.

At first it seemed as if her charity was to be but poorly rewarded. Six months after, on January 24, 1889, she was seized with the most dreadful internal pains, which made her cry aloud in agony. For four months these pains continued at intervals. Finally the doctors declared that some internal organ had been displaced, and that it was absolutely necessary for her to lie on her back.

Directly she began to feel better, the invalid wanted to drive to church. Although she had only a square to cross, a fresh attack came on. Shortly afterwards, she was obliged to take to crutches. At the same time the internal trouble grew worse and more complicated by *phlegmon* and *tumour*.

Mme. Gordet was attended by several doctors. Among them may be mentioned Dr. Barbey, Dr. Castay of Henrichemont, and Dr. Témoin of Bourges. Every doctor, every remedy—even homœopathy—was had recourse to, but in vain. The patient herself said: "I consulted thirteen doctors, one after the other, and followed their prescriptions for twelve years. But my hopes were always blighted, and from the very first day of my illness I have been slowly getting worse."

After another year a fresh attack came on which threatened to be fatal. Dr. Castay sent for the parents of the invalid, who received Extreme Unction and who resigned herself to die.

Pelvic peritonitis had set in.

. . . . . .

The year 1890 was as unlucky as the one that had gone before. In the spring of 1891, Mme. Gordet, tired of useless remedies, complained to

her doctor, who said: "There only remains one more possible means of cure. . . . Try to regain your strength as quickly as possible, and, when you can bear the journey to Paris, a clever surgeon shall perform the necessary operation."

But the patient was too weak to undergo the operation. Two months later, she wrote: "My longest walk is to go to my sofa with the help of my crutches."

Yet she hoped to make a pilgrimage to Lourdes, and in the same letter she said: "But alas! how shall I endure the journey?—I who on my very best days cannot bear to be wheeled half a mile in my little invalid carriage."

She had, however, the conviction that, if she could get to Lourdes, she would be cured. Still, resigned, she always added, "God's will, not mine!"

God evidently willed that she should not make the pilgrimage that year, for, from a medical point of view, this journey was pure madness. The patient herself felt and declared she might die on the way. In these circumstances both her family and the curé of Henrichemont persuaded her to give up that dangerous journey.

. . . . . .

In the early part of 1892, the doctor said to Mme. Gordet:—

"Surgery is making great progress nowadays: why not decide to go to Paris to be operated upon?"

"No, doctor," she replied. "My family are against it, nor do I wish it either. . . . But I intend to go to Lourdes, and there I shall be cured without an operation."

"The journey is practically impossible for you," replied the doctor; "besides, you will not be cured."

The invalid fully realised the danger. She feared to be over bold, and thus to prejudice others against religion, so she prayed: "O my God, if I have to die on the way to Lourdes, call me to Thee before I start."

. . . . . .

But in spite of everything, she started, accompanied by her husband. They were to meet the pilgrims from Berry at Châteauroux on August 28th.

The little invalid carriage was carefully drawn by hand, so as to avoid jolting, from Henrichemont to the station, a distance of a mile and a quarter. Mme. Gordet was thinking sadly of her daughter, her parents, and the home she was perhaps leaving for ever. She fondly gazed on the beautiful and familiar scenery around her, and said to herself:

"When I come along this road again, it will either be on my own firm feet, or in a coffin."

She thus wavered between hope and despair; one voice called her to Lourdes, and another murmured to her not to leave her family and home, but to die, if die she must, among her own people, and not by the wayside like a tramp.

When, a little later, the train started, her husband saw her eyes filled with great tears.

Her father was bitterly opposed to her going to Lourdes, and had refused to bid her good-bye. Having made every effort to dissuade her, he had gone into the country on the very eve of her departure, there to bewail the daughter whom he feared never to see again.

On the journey every one pitied her. As far as Châteauroux they travelled first class, but, after this, they found that there were no first-class carriages in the pilgrim train. As a penance, and also to insure a certain equality among the pilgrims, the train was third class, with the exception of one second-class carriage. M. and Mme. Gordet counted on taking this, but it was full. With difficulty they found room among the third-class passengers.

"There were six of us, counting our curé, who had come from Morlac," relates a lady traveller.[1] "We expected to meet three other pilgrims at Châteauroux to fill our vacant seats. We fondly hoped that the tenth place would remain unfilled, so as to give us a little more comfort. The idea of spending the night sitting upright or propped up against one another was not very pleasant. However, as time went on, and no one came, we began to hope that all four places might be left vacant . . . what luck!

"Suddenly, just as the train was about to start, the door was roughly opened, and we saw a porter carrying a young woman who looked ghastly.

"'Heavens! an invalid!' we hastily called out, to show our unwillingness to allow this intrusion, which would make us all so uncomfortable. But our objections were not noticed; the husband was already in the carriage, taking his wife from the porter's arms. We still protested, but the gentleness of the stranger completely disarmed us.

"'I am worse than I appear to be,' she said to me, 'and the least jolt might give me peritonitis.

[1] Mlle. Hélène Bellier, of Montrouse. This account was published in the *Courrier de l'Ile Bourbon.*

It is with this fear in their hearts that my parents saw me leave them, and that my husband accompanies me. We have tried every compartment, but they are all quite full. Here there seems to be a little room; let me stay with you, and during the journey my husband will try to find me a place elsewhere.'

"And as we said nothing, quite abashed by such angelic sweetness, she said very humbly: 'I am very sorry to give you so much trouble, and I quite understand how put out you must be.'

"Then we tried to make up for our previous selfishness; we gave up two opposite corner seats to the sick woman and her husband, and even tried to improvise a bed by means of a portmanteau placed between the seats.

"Having been ill for twelve years, and not having walked for four, she was unable to sit up. She suffered terrible internal pains, which made her cry out when touched. She had left home in the early morning, and was very tired. . . . In the middle of the night we heard her say to her husband, 'I am absolutely exhausted, if we could but get the mattress which I had in the other train.'

"The day was oppressive; an overpowering heat obliged us to leave the train every time it stopped, so as to get a little fresh air, or a little water, to cool our faces and hands. But the poor invalid, unable to move, lay quiet and uncomplaining.

"A little beyond Agen, the statue of Our Lady of Welcome came in sight on the top of the hill, where it can be seen for miles around; the invalid was overjoyed. In her heart she repeated:

"'Welcome, welcome! Yes, my mother, you welcome me. I trust in you. Oh, cure me, do!'

"At Tarbes she joined in the general emotion at the sight of the glorious snowy crests of the Pyrenees lit up by the evening sun. The towering mountains were clearly visible although still forty-five miles distant. Every one said: 'We shall soon be at our journey's end, in the land of our Mother. The Grotto of the Immaculate Virgin nestles at the foot of this magnificent range.'

"At last six o'clock struck. 'Lourdes! Here is Lourdes!'

"The magic word sped from one end of the train to the other, thrilling every heart with enthusiasm. Thus in the olden days, when the Crusaders first saw the Holy City from afar, they had cried with one loud voice:

"'Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Behold Jerusalem!'"

. . . . . .

Hardly had Mme. Gordet reached her hotel before she wished to be carried towards the Grotto to see the torch-light procession pass. The crowd was immense that night. The invalid gazed with delight at the endless line of people. She could hear the pilgrims singing in the distance; she could see the candles flickering, but she could not see the hands which carried them, for they remained in the darkness.

Before her lay a great sea of fire, a moving sea, with sparks for crested waves. Her pious mind transformed them into thousands of stars descended from heaven, to pay homage to Mary!

Innumerable and confused sounds of voices reached her; but over all, from one end of the procession to the other, floated uninterrupted the refrain, "*Ave, Ave, Ave, Maria.*"

o

Mme. Gordet repeated the sacred words with a great love. From the depths of her heart she hailed her who is full of grace, and who was soon going to cure her, as she hoped.

She thought of her twelve long years of suffering, of the many illnesses she had endured! For the last three years abscesses had constantly been forming, which came to a head every fortnight or three weeks. Only four days before one of these had broken, and suppurated very fully and frequently. The abscess was still in this state when she started. The evening before, when her doctor went to see her for the last time, he had said very decidedly:

"On your return from Lourdes do not stop here, but go straight on to Paris. This must be put a stop to. You must submit to that operation, which is your only means of cure."

The disease was at its height, and yet she dared ask Our Lady to cure her.[1] Who is she, after all, to obtain so exceptional a favour? Are there not many others more worthy to have their prayers granted? And supposing she were cured miraculously? What a responsibility for the rest of her life! A great dread of a miracle seized her, who had so ardently longed for a miracle.

Thus, divided between hope and fear, confidence and resignation, she spent her first evening at Lourdes, the echoes of the pilgrims' chant ringing in her ears, while she watched the long fiery serpent unrolling its luxurious rings along the Gave and on the hillside.

The procession was over when she returned to her hotel. Here and there pilgrims were chanting

[1] See Appendix, Note 18, p. 540, Fr. ed.

their last good-night to the Madonna, and through the gloom could be seen the glow of lighted candles, singly and in groups, as the last witnesses of the magnificent spectacle made their way home.

There was no sleep for Mme. Gordet that night. Her thoughts kept her awake. But she finally grew calmer as she prayed, "Thy will be done, O Lord!"

. . . . . .

At length day dawned. The invalid arose. It was August 30th, a date destined never to fade from her memory.

She was at the Grotto at six, hearing Mass with the pilgrims from Alsace-Lorraine. Leaning on her crutches, and aided by her husband, she went up to receive Holy Communion, and then went back to her little invalid carriage.

Again she asked Our Lady to cure her, but with humble submission to God's will. Generously she offered health, even life, to God, if He willed her to suffer or die.

A little later she went to the Medical Office, and asked to be examined. The president looked at her certificate, and said: "It is useless to examine you. Your illness is so well known that none could diagnose you better than your doctors who have tended you for so long." And he added: "If Our Lady cures you, it will be a great favour."

This was not very encouraging. It is the custom at the Lourdes Medical Office to calm down the hopes of the patients rather than to over-excite them. Mme. Gordet went away feeling somewhat discouraged, nevertheless an hour after she was seeking admittance at the piscina.

"It was then ten o'clock," relates the lady whom

we were quoting just now, "and I had just finished saying my prayers at the Grotto. I was thinking of returning to the hotel, when the people near the piscina suddenly became very excited. I went nearer to see what was the matter. At that moment a victorious shout rose from a hundred lungs, '*Magnificat*, brethren, a patient has just been cured!'

"Then the crowd rushed forward, everybody wanting to look and to see for themselves. I also looked, and was amazed.

"It was our invalid, our patient, the companion of our journey. Her confidence in Mary had been rewarded, she was cured! She walked radiantly, and, oblivious of the crowd around her, went straight to the statue of the Virgin, and knelt down."

. . . . . .

On arriving to take her bath, Mme. Gordet heard the priest from Lorraine exhorting his pilgrims to pray, for they were about to go away, and not one cure among them had taken place that year.

Full of pity for these pilgrims from Metz and Strasburg, who were French in heart in spite of 1870, Mme. Gordet forgot herself, and begged God to cure one of their sick, even if it were necessary to postpone her own cure. Thus praying, she entered one of the piscinas.

There were there as infirmarians the Countess du Coëtlosquet, Mme. Mongeolle, both from Nancy, and two nuns from Niederbronn. These ladies placed the patient on a sheet held between them, and lowered her into the miraculous water.

Meanwhile Mme. Gordet repeated aloud her prayer of resignation: "Thy will be done, O my God!"

"All four of us," writes the Countess of Coëtlosquet, "were much touched. Mme. Mongeolle then said to the patient, 'Do you not believe, then, that Our Lady can cure you?'

"'I do,' she replied. And without appearing to suffer in the slightest, she raised herself straight up, and began to walk about in the piscina. We stretched out our arms to help her in case she should fall, but the cure was complete! Together we thanked Our Lady. Mme. Gordet joined her hands, and said in a voice which I shall never forget:

"'Ah, help me to thank the Blessed Virgin! It is very easy to beg a favour; the difficulty is to be as grateful as one ought to be.'

"The first excitement over," continues the lady infirmarian, "she went alone up the three steps leading out of the piscina, and then proceeded to the Grotto."[1]

"I saw her come out," we were told by an eye-witness, M. l'Abbé Meyer of Metz; "she ran rather than walked. Near the statue of the Virgin, which overlooks the piscinas, she threw herself on her knees in an ecstasy of gratitude."

Meanwhile M. Gordet was waiting anxiously, leaning against a tree, his hands on the handle of the little carriage which had borne his wife for four long years. Suddenly he noticed his wife coming towards him, crutches in hand, walking steadily and smiling. He could not believe his own eyes. He thought he was dreaming or the victim of an illusion.

But his wife was already close to him. It was

[1] Letter to the Countess du Coëtlosquet, Oct. 17, 1892. See *Un des beaux Faits de Lourdes*, p. 186.

really she after all. Lost in wonderment, he fell crying on his knees. His wife then took hold of the little carriage, and wheeled it in front of the Grotto, her husband following astonished and amazed.

Then from all sides arose the cry, "A miracle! a miracle!" and the *Magnificat* resounded enthusiastically from a thousand throats.

. . . . . .

A few minutes later Mme. Gordet again went to the Medical Office, this time without support of any kind.

Accustomed as he was to miracles, Dr. Boissarie could not help gazing at her in astonishment. Her smiling and joyful appearance was such a contrast to the weak and exhausted state in which he had seen her only one short hour ago.

The doctor's certificate was once more read through. "We could not find 'any trace,'" writes Dr. Boissarie, "of the inflammation which had been of such long standing and had spread so far."

The president, aided by Dr. Thomassin of Ahéville, and Dr. Paul Ducreux of Bligny-sur-Ouche, who happened to be present, examined the patient thoroughly. Their verdict was that regarding her general health the cure was complete, while the local lesions had disappeared without leaving any trace whatsoever.[1]

"Close to Mme. Gordet," adds the doctor, "was her husband, too overcome with joy to utter a word."

The next morning at seven o'clock the whole of the Berry pilgrimage assembled in the Church of the Rosary.

[1] *Annales*, vol. xxvi. p. 230.

In the front pew, close to the sanctuary steps, sat Mme. Gordet and her husband. Both went to Holy Communion, for the Blessed Virgin had cured the soul of the husband in curing his wife's body.

. . . . . .

That same day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Mme. Gordet had an appointment at the Medical Office. She had already been there twice since her cure. The report of her visit ran as follows: "She was quite changed, and looked as if she had enjoyed good health for months. She had eaten some bread very heartily, which she had not been able to do for several years."

She did not know why she had been asked to go to the Office again; but, in truth, M. Zola was to be there, and the president wished to introduce to him this lady so recently cured. When she entered the room Mme. Gordet did not know whom she was to meet. She took M. Zola for a doctor interested in her cure.

The president asked her to tell her story, and then suggested that M. Zola should question her himself.

He began by expressing his regret that the Grotto doctors had not personally examined the invalid.

"We were at liberty to do so," answered the doctor, "since she came and asked us to. But the certificate of her own doctor, who had attended her for so many years, was surely of more value than a hasty diagnosis such as we should have been obliged to make."

He might have added that the word of a sceptic was of more value in the eyes of many than his own

and undoubtedly ought to carry more weight with M. Zola himself!

The novelist then remarked that the certificate was of somewhat ancient date. It had been written three weeks before, on August 9, which was not so long for an infirmity which had lasted for years and could only be cured by a surgical operation.

M. Zola then addressed Mme. Gordet.

"Why did you refuse to undergo an operation?"

"Because I had no faith in it, and I was certain that Our Lady would cure me at Lourdes."

The rationalistic author was somewhat taken aback by so energetic a profession of faith and such complete contempt for human art. He quickly recovered himself, however.

"Why, then, did you not make the pilgrimage before if your faith was so great?"

Mme. Gordet, turning to the curé of Henrichemont, replied: "Because M. le Curé did not wish me to." M. Zola also turned to the aged priest, and said: "So you put off your parishioner's cure indefinitely? Or, perhaps, you were less sure of the result?"

"Pardon," was the reply, "Mme. Gordet's family withheld their consent; her doctor also declared that the journey was impossible, and, naturally, I did not dare to encourage her."

"That was prudent of you. . . . But why, then, did you eventually allow what you at first opposed, for the conditions remained the same."

"The first obstacles had been removed, for the family gave their consent, and M. Gordet was to accompany his wife. The doctor also gave the necessary certificate, and I was happy to join them,

and to come here to pray for the favour we have so well obtained."

"That is all quite correct. . . . I should have done the same in your place. What will your parishioners say, M. le Curé?"

"That I do not know; I am almost afraid of the enthusiastic reception we are likely to receive."

"You have made arrangements for your reception, M. le Curé?" M. Zola said, almost angrily.

The priest answered quietly: "The miracle happened just twenty-four hours ago. I asked M. and Mme. Gordet not to inform their family of the news until at least one night had confirmed this marvellous cure. It was not until this morning that they telegraphed home, and that I myself sent the news to my curate."

"I can say nothing to that, M. le Curé. You acted very wisely to wait."

Somewhat embarrassed, and not quite knowing what to say, the novelist twisted his moustache nervously. Suddenly he leant towards Mme. Gordet, and said: "Are you nervous, madame?"

"Really, monsieur, I hardly know what to answer. Perhaps yes, perhaps no. It depends what you mean exactly. I am nervous sometimes, as all women are, but my nerves do not control me."

Here the husband interposed by saying that his wife had never shown any special signs of nervousness, and that her long illness had certainly not been due to nerves.

M. Zola admitted that Mme. Gordet did indeed appear to be quite calm and mistress of herself, and that he had only put this question to her from conscientious motives.

Thereupon he returned to his usual objection, namely, that Mme. Gordet had been cured of paralysis which might have been due to her nervous system.

He forgot that paralysis, when so deep rooted, ceases to be functional and becomes organic, and that there is no suggestion, either from within or without, that can cure an organic disease, as we have already seen. Moreover, this was a case of pure paralysis, the whole system was affected, and a *tumour existed.*

M. Zola had replied: "This tumour was never proved to exist."

"But it was," he was told. "The patient's doctor had diagnosed it, and the abundant pus which had come from it left no room for doubt."

"Well," he replied, "if this tumour existed, what is there to prove that it will not return, that there will be no relapse?"

That remained to be seen, of course, but truly M. Zola was difficult to please. In the one case he objected because the cure was too recent, and in the other, that of Clémentine Trouvé, he complained that it was too old.

Some objections are equal to an avowal!

. . . . . .

The Berry pilgrimage reached Bourges on September 2nd, at half-past twelve. Some five or six people were waiting on the platform impatiently watching the arrival of the passengers.

Among them was a little girl of ten and an elderly man. Seeing Mme. Gordet coming towards them walking quite alone, they were too overcome to go and meet her.

But she, with open arms, went smiling to greet her father and her daughter. Quite beside himself, not knowing what he was doing, her father drew back as she advanced. Suddenly he threw his arms round the neck of the old curé.

"Ah, Monsieur le Curé," he cried, "allow me to embrace you—it is you who have saved her."

The meeting was a most touching one, and all those who witnessed it went away with tears in their eyes.

Having a four hours' wait at Bourges, they dined together. Mme. Gordet ate solid food without any difficulty, while her father watched her wondering and amazed. His joy seemed to have completely dazed him for the time being. Forgetting his scepticism and his former opposition to the pilgrimage, he raised his glass, in a moment of overwhelming gratitude, and drank "To the health of Our Lady of Lourdes."

It was his prayer—a prayer which, although peculiar, must surely have reached heaven!

. . . . . .

That evening they reached Henrichemont. A tremendous crowd was awaiting them. They flocked round Mme. Gordet, for every one wanted to see her. The next day her doctor came to visit her. He was much touched by what he saw.

"Madam," he said after a while, "I should like to examine you carefully. I want to ascertain all that has happened. I intend to make a very detailed examination, and will return this evening for that purpose."

The examination was long. Dr. Castay searched in vain for any trace of the inflammation or the

abscesses which he had watched for three years. Everything had disappeared. He found that the tissues were restored anew.

Without any hesitation he wrote a long certificate; its last words were as follows:—

"*From a medical point of view, I have every reason to conclude that a cure has taken place.* In the interests of the patient, I trust that it will be complete and lasting."

This wish still hides the reserve of a sceptical mind. M. Zola, rather than admit a miracle, had taken refuge in the uncertainty of the future. Time was to prove everything.

. . . . . .

Time has proved everything in a striking manner. Anxious to know Mme. Gordet's state of health since 1892, I wrote to her asking for information, and also whether the pamphlet I have quoted from was true as to details. This is her reply:—

HENRICHEMONT, *August* 24, 1904.

SIR,—I hasten to reply to your letter, and to certify that all that the author of *Un des beaux Faits de Lourdes* said in his pamphlet concerning my illness and cure is absolutely true.

The cure was both complete and instantaneous, and, since my first bath in the piscina on August 30, 1892, the disease has not reappeared.

The doctors were unable to find any trace of the disease, and I was never even convalescent. On my return from Lourdes, I was at once able to work, and even to endure considerable fatigue. All that is left to me of my long and cruel illness is the remembrance, which will always remain with me to help

me thank her who has been so good and merciful to me.

Love, gratitude, and glory be to Our Lady of Lourdes!—Yours, &c., V. GORDET.

I have also seen Mme. Gordet, and spoken with her on the occasion of her return to Lourdes to give thanks for her cure. No one would ever suppose that she had been an invalid, "she looks strong and robust."

Time has been appealed to, and time has responded by fully confirming the results of the first day.

Glory to Our Lady of Lourdes! Nature has never performed such wonders.

MARIE LEMARCHAND

The novelist, in search of a striking subject which would help him to justify his assumed title of "docteur ès sciences humaines," was very anxious to see the radical cure of an open sore.

Clémentine Trouvé afforded him this spectacle, but he objected to her case, it will be remembered, because its date was not sufficiently recent. He required something of the same nature to happen under his very eyes. Providence met his wish.

Among the pilgrims there was a young girl fearfully disfigured by lupus. Her name was Marie Lemarchand, and she was the eldest child of a large family. She worked hard every day and all day to keep her aged and infirm parents. This terrible disease had seized her in the very flower of her youth, for she was but eighteen.

M. Zola in his book describes her under the name of Elise Rouquet. His description is realistic and repulsive. We will quote some passages concerning the white train and the occupants of the carriages in which was the heroine. "The fourth patient was a slender girl whose face was entirely covered by a black fichu . . . from underneath the fichu a hoarse voice growled. . . . At last the veil fell, and Marie [the heroine] shuddered with horror. It was a case of lupus, which had preyed upon the unhappy woman's nose and mouth. Ulceration had spread, and was hourly spreading and devouring the membrane in its progress. The head looked hideously like a monster, with its rough hair and round staring eyes. The cartilage of the nose was almost eaten away, the mouth was drawn all on one side by the swollen condition of the upper lip. The whole was a frightfully distorted mass of matter and oozing blood.[1]

"Another traveller, in his turn, shuddered as he beheld Elise Rouquet cautiously slipping the tiny pieces of bread into her poor shapeless mouth. Every one in the carriage had turned pale at the sight of the awful apparition."

None of the pilgrims could look at her without experiencing an indescribable feeling of disgust. When they reached Poitiers there was a stop of some minutes, and a lively scene took place on the platform. "Many people meantime were hastening to the water tap in order to fill their pitchers, cans, and bottles. Madame Maze, who was of refined

[1] *Lourdes* (Paris, Fasquelle, 1903), pp. 15, 16. *N.B.*—The English translation does not give all these horrible details. See p. 131, English translation.

tastes and careful of her person, thought of going to wash her hands there; but just as she arrived she found Elise Rouquet drinking, and she recoiled at sight of that disease-smitten face, so terribly disfigured and robbed of nearly all semblance of humanity. And all the others likewise shuddered, likewise hesitated to fill their bottles, pitchers, and cans at the tap from which she had drunk."[1]

But here they are at Lourdes, and at the hospital, preparing to go to the Grotto.

"Elise Rouquet had ended by discovering a little pocket glass in the hands of a woman near her . . . and having borrowed it, she leant it against the bolster, and then, with infinite care, began to fashion her fichu as elegantly as possible about her head, in order to hide her distorted features."[2]

. . . . . .

Such was the unfortunate young girl whom God brought into contact with the man pretending to find out the truth.

This was evidently a most straightforward case. It was not a question of an internal disease, a circumstance often made the excuse for refusing to believe. The celebrated "doctor of human science" could see with his own eyes the frightful sore which he has described. We may add that, lover of the realistic though he be, he has not told all the horror of Marie Lemarchand's disease. Not only her face was in the loathsome condition which has been described. She had large sores on her left leg as well as in other parts, and, to crown all, her lungs were tuberculous at both apices. For three months

[1] See *Lourdes* (English translation), p. 41. [2] *Ibid.* p. 129.

she had been coughing and spitting blood, and every evening that fever came over her which in phthisis is the harbinger of death.[1]

The pilgrims who saw her in this dreadful condition as she left the white train, on August 20, 1892, were touched with compassion. There was not one of them, however wretched his lot, who did not feel that he was more favoured than she. One thought filled them all: "What a miracle it would be, if only the Blessed Virgin were to cure so loathsome a disease!"

. . . . . .

Marie first went into one of the piscinas on Sunday, August 21st, at about four in the afternoon.

Hardly had she touched the miraculous water before she felt violent pains in her head and face. Then, suddenly jumping up, she pulled off her bandages, crying, "I am cured!"

And it really was so. The suppuration had ceased, and the wound healed up, while the lips, nose, and tongue were no longer swollen. Dr. d'Hombres happened to be close at hand. He saw the patient immediately before and immediately after her immersion, so that his evidence is most valuable.

"I remember very well," says the doctor, "seeing Marie Lemarchand awaiting her turn to go into the piscina. I could not help being struck by her aspect, which was particularly revolting. Both her cheeks, the lower part of her nose, and her upper lip were covered with a tuberculous ulcer, and secreted matter abundantly. The bandages on her face were soiled with matter.

[1] *Annales*, vol. xxv, p. 124; vol. xxvi. p. 36.

"On her return from the piscina, I immediately followed her to the hospital. I recognised her quite well, although her face was *entirely changed.* Instead of the horrible sore I had so lately seen, the surface was red, it is true, but *dry and covered with a new skin.* The linen which she had previously used to bandage her face was on one side and soiled with matter.

"This poor woman had also had, before the bath, a similar sore on her leg. This also *had dried up in the piscina.* I can sincerely say," adds Dr. d'Hombres, "that I was very much struck by this sudden change, caused by mere immersion in cold water, knowing well that lupus is a most difficult disease which resists every kind of treatment."

. . . . . .

Dr. d'Hombres himself accompanied Marie Lemarchand to the Medical Office. It happened to be full of doctors, literary men, and journalists.

The girl was examined, but the doctors, with their stethoscopes, could find nothing the matter with her lungs. All trace of phthisis had disappeared. The sores on the face and leg had quite dried up. All that could be seen was that the new skin, which had been formed so suddenly, was red and shiny.

"Behold the case of your dreams, M. Zola!" said the president to the author. "A visible sore suddenly healed. Look at this girl well."

"Ah no!" replied the novelist, trying to put off his embarrassment with a joke. "I do not want to look at her. She is still too ugly."

But really this cure had very much impressed him.

as his book proves, for he is constantly reverting to it.

He does not attempt to deny it. But whilst frankly admitting it, he tells it in a manner which seems to supply a natural explanation to those who prefer the extravagant to the supernatural.

For instance, in describing his arrival at the Medical Office, where he saw her, he says: "Elise Rouquet appeared, and, removing her wraps, displayed her diseased face to view. She related that she had been bathing it with her handkerchief ever since the morning, and it seemed to her that her sore, previously so fresh and raw, was already beginning to dry and grow paler in colour. *This was true* . . . the aspect of the sore was now less horrible." [1]

The next day, just as she is returning from the Grotto, he makes her meet a certain Dr. Ferrand, one of the characters in his book.

"Elise Rouquet's case interested him still more, for it had now become evident that the lupus, the sore which was eating away her face, was showing signs of cure. She had continued bathing her face at the miraculous fountain, and had just come from the Medical Office, where Dr. Bonamy [Dr. Boissarie] had triumphed. Ferrand, quite surprised, went and examined the sore, which, although still far from healed, was already desiccated, displaying all the symptoms of a gradual cure." [2]

An avowal can be read between these lines. The author had been too close an observer of the change which had taken place in this dreadful face, and he was too well aware of the numerous witnesses of the event, to risk a formal denial.

[1] *Lourdes* (English translation), p. 167. [2] *Ibid.* 305–6.

The sore was already paler in colour and slightly desiccated; this was true, and he admits it. He shows that the sore which had been so loathsome and repulsive "was already paler and desiccated," and "displayed all the symptoms of gradual cure."

But these attenuated admissions are calculated to lead the reader to believe that the cure was slow and gradual. This is absolutely contrary to the truth.

The healed tissue which replaced the sore was red and shiny at first; it grew paler gradually, yet very rapidly. This is the truth!

But the ulcer itself was radically cured from the very first moment; the *suppuration ceased instantaneously*, never to return. At the same time, and just as suddenly, every trace of swelling disappeared.

M. Zola could not have been ignorant of these facts. He was present at the examination made by several doctors, he knew the result of that examination, and should have contested it at the time if he deemed it wrong.

Not only did he not contest it, but when the president invited him to look more closely into the matter, or to make any observations, he replied vaguely, to avoid making the inevitable avowal.

Happily, however, there are minds who seek after truth more sincerely and more loyally. Marie Lemarchand's doctor, Dr. La Néelle, who had been some time attached to the infirmary at Caen, when he saw how completely his young patient had been transformed, wrote frankly and courageously:—

"I am still much touched by having come into contact with this absolutely supernatural cure.

Marie Lemarchand undoubtedly suffered from advanced tuberculosis, and now I can find no trace of it."

After pointing out these inaccuracies, we will examine the fantastic explanation which our novelist somewhat timidly puts forward. He makes one of his characters say: "Our most learned medical men suspect many of these sores to be of nervous origin . . . some are also beginning to prove that the faith which heals can even cure sores, certain forms of lupus among others."[1]

Yet again, in reference to this same cure, which evidently troubles him greatly, he makes another of his characters say, "That the nervous origin of certain skin diseases was due to faulty nutrition."[2]

The fact to be explained being quite certain, as the author himself admits, if any reader is content with such statements as an excuse to refuse to believe in supernatural intervention, it is evident that he does not possess this *faith which heals*, as Charcot calls it. Rather is he the victim of the faith which kills, and which makes him the blind victim of his prejudices.

These arguments will not bear looking into. First, it is quite unproved that suggestion, either provoked or spontaneous, whether called faith or by any other name, can heal sores perfectly.

I have already said in the first chapter of Part II. of this book, that the greatest hypnotiser of our days, Bernheim, never obtained any such results during a series of observations which spread over twenty years.

[1] *Lourdes* (English translation), p. 167. [2] *Ibid.* p. 386.

And when we come to deal with an *instantaneous* cure, as was that of Marie Lemarchand, the result is still more unheard of. There is not a *single* instance of a similar nature, past or present.

The sole cure of a sore due to the so-called *faith which heals* that Charcot could find in history—or legend—comes from the first half of the eighteenth century, and was slow and gradual.[1]

This is how they prove that "the faith which heals can even cure sores." Besides which, if ulcers were healed by nervous action, it would mean that they were of nervous origin, which is the case according to the novelist.

To assert that "our most learned men suspect *many* of these sores to be of nervous origin" is mere mockery. If such cases of "false lupus," as M. Zola calls them, do exist, they must be very rare. Lupus is usually of tubercular origin.

In any case, Marie Lemarchand's lupus was of undoubted origin. The doctor's statement is quite clear and explicit on the point. Besides, the tubercular character of the disease was clearly indicated by the constitution of the young patient whose lungs and face were both affected by tuberculosis. Here was certainly true lupus, tubercular lupus, not due to any nervous influence.

But, once more, had it been of nervous origin, which it certainly was not, and were lupus of so-called nervous origin amenable to suggestion, which again it is not, there would always remain the instantaneousness of the cure as the evident proof of Divine intervention.

M. Zola tries, somewhat slyly, to deny Divine

[1] See p. 136.

intervention. It would be far better if he tried to explain it, since it is so certain. This he does not risk doing, for explanation is impossible without admitting the supernatural.

As to the scar which offended the novelist's taste for beauty, it lost its redness completely as time went on.

In November 1893, in the room of the Luxembourg Circle, I was present at a most interesting lecture given by Dr. Boissarie on Lourdes in reference to Zola's novel.

He had brought as many of the cured people as possible from their various homes, and they were there on the platform with him. When he had read Zola's realistic description of Elise Rouquet, he added :—

"Elise Rouquet is, as you know, Marie Lemarchand. You have heard what she was like. Well!" —and he turned to one of the persons on the platform—"Come forward, my child, and show the audience what the Blessed Virgin has done for you."

An eye-witness relates how "a pale and beautiful girl dressed in black came forward."

The audience were thrilled, and still more touched when they perceived that the poor girl was crying.

She did not know the passage which she had now heard for the first time, nor had she ever known that the novelist had described her case. When she realised that the dreadful description to which she had been listening applied to herself, she was covered with confusion and her eyes filled with tears.

The sight of the girl's sweet and innocent face after the revolting picture which had been drawn made the people applaud loudly. There were some who were even moved to tears.

Not the slightest disfiguring trace was left of the horrible disease which had disfigured the girl only fifteen months ago.

Ten years after, a celebrated doctor was so struck by what he had read about this miracle that he wrote to Marie Lemarchand's own doctor, to know if the disease had reappeared at all. He very kindly gave me the answer which he received. The date of the letter is January 1904 :—

"My dear Colleague,—I gave Dr. Boissarie all the necessary information and a complete diagnosis about Marie Lemarchand some twelve years ago. She suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis in both lungs. She had ulcers on the face which were as large as one's hand, and which suppurated freely.

"She had similar sores on the legs, and an hysterical contraction of one limb—the arm or the leg—I cannot quite remember which.

"She was cured *suddenly* when bathing in the piscina at Lourdes. She felt violent pains, and then found all symptoms of her disease had left her instantaneously. The sores had dried up immediately, and were covered with a red scar which grew paler in colour after a few weeks. The scars were visible some years after.

"I saw the invalid *immediately on her return.* I did not recognise her, so much was she changed. I saw a graceful young girl coming towards me *instead*

of the *mass of humanity with a horrible and monstrous face which I had seen ten days previously.*

"*The tuberculosis had also disappeared.*

"The cure *has lasted.*

"Believe me, my dear Sir, &c. &c.

"Dr. La Néelle,

"Late Director of the Infirmary at Caen

"*P.S.*—I lost sight of the patient in 1897. She was living in Paris. I left Caen in 1900, and continued to visit her family. She had not had a relapse at this date, but was going on very well."

Thus God had cured at the same time, and in a few minutes, a disease as well as a constitution.[1]

[1] The eighth edition of this book was very nearly ready when I learned Marie Lemarchand's present address. I withheld publication until I was able to obtain further information about her. Her health is excellent. She works very hard, and has been married for six years. Her cure has now lasted thirteen years. I quote her letter in full:—

"Coubert, Seine-et-Marne,
Dec. 1st, 1905.

"Sir,—The dreadful disease of which I was cured at Lourdes has never reappeared. I am housekeeper in a château. I have been married six years, have had four healthy children, and am expecting a fifth. This is what the Blessed Virgin has done for a poor invalid who was given up by the doctors and declared incurable, and was only expecting death.

"I should like to say that you have been very well informed about my terrible illness and sudden cure. What you say is the exact truth. I was cured instantaneously, not after several baths, but after one only.

"When I went into the piscina, I was suffering cruelly from horrible sores, and I came out completely cured. I felt quite well. I immediately took off the bandages which were on my face and also my leg—there was nothing there. I could pass my hands over the places without feeling any pain. The suppuration had ceased suddenly. How joyfully and gratefully I

MARIE LEMARCHAND

ELISE ROUQUET IN ZOLA'S "LOURDES"

MARIE LEBRANCHU

LA GRIVOTTE IN ZOLA'S "LOURDES"

MARIE LEBRANCHU

"In the adjoining compartment, La Grivotte, hitherto stretched out, scarce breathing, like a corpse, had just raised herself up: she was a tall, slipshod, singular-looking creature of over thirty, with a round ravaged face, which her fuzzy hair and flaming eyes rendered almost pretty. She had reached the third stage of phthisis. For five years past she had been making the round of the hospitals of Paris, and she spoke familiarly of all the great doctors.

"'They say that I have one lung done for, and that the other one is scarcely any better. There are great big holes, you know. At first I only felt bad between the shoulders, and spat up some froth. But then I got thin, and became a dreadful sight. And now I'm always in a sweat, and cough till I think I'm going to bring my heart up. And I can no longer spit. And I haven't strength to stand—you see, I can't eat.'

"A stifling sensation made her pause, and she became livid."

This is M. Zola's description of Marie Lebranchu under the name of La Grivotte.[1]

went to the Grotto with my dear mother, who had been witness of all my sufferings and of my cure! I had not walked for three and a half years.

"I am infinitely grateful to the Blessed Virgin, who changed me so suddenly, and from the bottom of my heart I say, Glory and Thanksgiving to our Lady of Lourdes!—I am, &c.

"MARIE AUTHIER (*née* Marie Lemarchand)."

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[1] *Lourdes* (English translation), p. 11.

The portrait is a true one. The novelist does not often err in his descriptions of diseases.

. . . . . .

Marie was indeed over thirty, as he remarks, for in 1892 she was exactly thirty-five. A native of Paris,[1] a child of parents who had both died of consumption, she had been from her birth upwards a victim of this terrible scourge which destroys so many lives in our large, over-populated, and sunless towns.

She had been treated at several Parisian hospitals. At the Hôtel-Dieu she had been under Professor Germain Sée. There her expectorations had been examined, and analysis had revealed the existence of those microbes which are characteristic of tuberculosis. At the time of her journey to Lourdes she had just left the Netherlands Hospital for consumptives.

She had spent ten months there. The house surgeon, Dr. Marquezy, had stated in a certificate that she was suffering from pulmonary phthisis, with softening and vomicæ in the lung tissues. The unhappy woman had been bedridden for months, and was constantly spitting up blood and matter. Her stomach was completely out of order. She was unable to retain any food, and had lost 48 lbs. in weight. These symptoms were most serious and probably fatal.

All these details are taken from the official report kept at the Medical Office. So far the novel and history agree.

. . . . . .

Marie Lebranchu reached Lourdes in the same train as Marie Lemarchand, on August 20, 1892.

[1] She lived at 172 Rue Championnet.

She visited the piscinas on the very same day. When the bathers saw this living skeleton approaching, they hesitated. One may indulge in heroic imprudence one's self, but no one has the right to encourage it in others. At Lourdes this is a recognised principle. Marie Lebranchu, however, insisted on bathing, and the devoted infirmarians offered no further resistance. After all, it was her right.

We shall see what happened.

M. Zola was at the Medical Office, where the invalid presented herself shortly afterwards, and he has described the scene.

"All at once the office was turned fairly topsy-turvy by the arrival of La Grivotte, who swept in like a whirlwind, almost dancing with delight, and shouting in a full voice, 'I am cured, I am cured!'

"And forthwith she began to relate that they had first of all refused to bathe her, and that she had been obliged to insist, and beg and sob, in order to prevail upon them to do so. . . . And then it had all happened as she had previously said it would. She had not been immersed in the icy water for three minutes—all perspiring as she was, with her consumptive rattle—before she had felt strength returning to her like a whip stroke lashing her whole body. And now a flaming excitement possessed her; radiant, stamping her feet, she was unable to keep still.

"'I am cured . . . I am cured!'

"Pierre[1] looked at her, this time quite stupefied. Was this the same girl, whom on the previous night

[1] Pierre is the hero of the novel; the author makes him his mouthpiece.

he had seen lying on the carriage seat, coughing and spitting blood, with her face of ashen hue? He could not recognise her as she now stood there, erect and slender, her cheeks rosy, her eyes sparkling, upbuoyed by a determination to live, a joy in living already."[1]

It must not be forgotten that, according to M. Zola himself, there were present in the office at this moment from twenty to thirty doctors. They were all invited to examine the invalid, and most of them did so in a very thorough manner.

The authenticated reports read as follows: "After her first immersion, on Saturday, 20th, Marie Lebranchu felt suddenly well. On examining her at the office, we could find neither rattle (rhoncus) nor crepitation, nor dulness."

The president adds: "There remained not the slightest trace of lesion in the lungs. The next day the patient was again examined. The former invalid no longer coughed nor expectorated, and was eating heartily. Every day until her departure it was ascertained that her cure was perfectly maintained."[2]

. . . . . .

The style of the novelist and of the official statements are very different, but they are essentially the same in their conclusion. The patient was cured.

Even the detail of the recovered appetite was not forgotten by the novelist.

"La Grivotte at once squatted down on her mattress on the floor . . . and, taking a piece of bread from her pocket, proceeded to devour it.[3]

[1] *Lourdes* (English translation), p. 168.
[2] Lecture given to the Luxembourg Circle.
[3] *Lourdes*, p. 305.

"Her strength had suddenly returned. She was," says the novelist, "in a fever of extraordinary activity . . . and she related that she had eaten half a fowl for dinner. She who had been unable to eat for long months past. Then, too, she had followed the torch-light procession on foot during nearly a couple of hours, and she would certainly have danced till daybreak had the Blessed Virgin been pleased to give a ball."[1]

Such are the facts. They are somewhat dramatically, if not lightly, depicted by the novelist, but, on the whole, the account is true to history.

. . . . . .

But there also exists a strong contrast, as we are about to see. The novelist, unwilling to admit a miracle at any price, is obliged to resort to all manner of explanations.

How is it possible, asks the author, to believe in the transgression of laws when one does not know all the laws which exist, especially in medicine? There are many forces which are but little known, or not known at all.

We have already replied to this argument at great length.[2]

Let us repeat, merely, that it is not necessary to know *everything* to be certain of *something*.[3]

M. Zola himself said at the Medical Office, and he repeated it in his book: "Let me merely see a finger cut with a penknife, let me see it dipped in the water, and let it come out with the cut cicatrised, and I shall respectfully bow to the miracle."[4]

[1] *Lourdes* (English translation), p. 181.
[2] Part II. ch. i.
[3] See Part II. ch. i. for the replies.
[4] *Lourdes* (English translation), p. 166.

In his eyes it was a certain law, which no future discovery could alter, that Nature does not repair her breaches in a moment; she needs time to help her. Yet he saw that law violated at Lourdes.

. . . . . .

Unfortunately for the novelist, he tries to enumerate these unknown forces which he brings in to prop up a shattered argument: "Auto-suggestions, long prepared disturbances of the nerves; inspiriting influence of the journey, the prayers and the hymns; and especially the healing breath, the unknown force which was evolved from the multitude, in the acute crisis of faith."[1]

In short, these "unknown forces" are reduced either to spontaneous suggestion, such as is self-exercised in special circumstance, or to the "inspiriting influence of a journey" (?), or the "influence of the hymns"—that is to say, auto-suggestion; or to suggestion, properly so-called, which comes from without, whether due to a person or a multitude.

And can this be called an unknown force?

Suggestion is a very well-known force, and one that has been much studied and investigated. It is known exactly what is to be expected, and what not, from suggestion. So much we have proved on the authority of Bernheim.[2]

It is hardly fair to the reader to speak of suggestive therapeutics with such an air of oracular mystery. It is presuming too much on his ignorance and simplicity. As to the "healing breath," of which M. Zola speaks, it must be his own special patent, discovered by himself. Until now

[1] *Lourdes* (English translation), p. 171.
[2] See Part II. ch. i.

it has always been asserted that crowds are unhygienic, not to say unhealthy.

As Cicero makes one of his characters say in his Dialogues: "Irony is only in good taste when we joke, but when we speak seriously, let us be careful! Speech, like justice, should be ruled by conscience."[1]

. . . . . .

The novelist, who witnessed Marie Lebranchu's cure, and who describes her, found a second means of escaping the consequences of this embarrassing fact.

He tried to persuade his readers that the happy result was merely due to nervous influences, because it did not last. Hardly have the pilgrims left Lourdes before La Grivotte is again afflicted by her cruel disease.

We will quote the whole passage, with the remark that the author bases his whole theory of negation on the fact which he relates. The pilgrims were about to arrive at Bordeaux.

"For a moment or so Pierre had been astonished by the demeanour of La Grivotte. While the other pilgrims and patients were already dozing off, sinking down amidst the luggage, which the constant jolting shook, she had risen to her feet, and was clinging to the partition in a sudden spasm of agony. And under the pale, yellow, dancing gleam of the lamp she once more looked emaciated, with a livid, tortured face. . . .

"Sister Hyacinthe turned quickly and caught La Grivotte in her arms. A frightful fit of coughing, however, prostrated the unhappy creature upon the seat, and for five minutes she continued stifling,

[1] Brutus, 85.

shaken by such an attack that her poor body seemed to be actually cracking and rending. Then a red thread oozed from between her lips, and at last she spat up blood by the throatful.

"The Sister settled herself beside La Grivotte, made her rest her head against her shoulder, and wiped the blood from her lips. . . .

"Pierre was thoroughly upset. This sudden, overwhelming relapse had sent an icy chill through the whole carriage. Many of the passengers raised themselves up and looked at La Grivotte with terror in their eyes. Then they dived down into their corners again, and nobody spoke, nobody stirred any further. Pierre, for his part, reflected on the curious medical aspect of this girl's case. Her strength had come back to her over yonder. She had displayed a ravenous appetite, she had walked long distances with a dancing gait, her face quite radiant the while; and now she had spat blood, her cough had broken out afresh, she again had the heavy ashen face of one in the last agony. Her ailment had returned to her with brutal force, victorious over everything. Was this then, some special case of phthisis complicated by neurosis? Or was it some other malady, some unknown disease, quietly continuing its work in the midst of contradictory diagnoses? The sea of error and ignorance, the darkness amidst which human science is still struggling, again appeared to Pierre."[1]

This "curious medical case" which the novelist is pleased to dwell upon is entirely the invention of M. Zola's brain. He has invented it to justify a preconceived theory which he is loth to give up.

[1] *Lourdes* (English translation), pp. 455, 456.

His explanation of the miracles at Lourdes had been evolved in his own mind before he arrived at the Grotto. Once there, every barrier fell, every door was opened to him, and yet he did not come across a single case to support his theory.

But this lack was easily remedied. He invented what he required in the person of Mlle. de Guersaint, who is purely neurotic, and who is cured simply by nervous influence. This person is entirely an invention of his creative brain.

Then, too, in relating actual facts he arranges them so as to serve his own ends. Marie Lemarchand was cured instantaneously; he makes her cure slow and gradual.

As for Marie Lebranchu, it is almost incomprehensible that any author should have dared so to outrage truth.

This "medical case" was not complicated as the novelist asserts. On the contrary, it was of an extreme simplicity, although of course very embarrassing to a sceptic determined not to recognise a miracle. The whole case may be put in a nutshell: the unhappy consumptive was cured at Lourdes instantaneously, and she *never had any relapse.*

"What!" you exclaim. "La Grivotte never spat up blood after she left Lourdes?"

No, and again no! She has *never* spat blood since her stay at Lourdes, either before reaching Bordeaux, or after, either during the journey or since. The phthisis which instantaneously disappeared in the piscina has never returned at any time.

In this respect M. Zola lies as boldly as a man who declares that black is white. A year after her cure, Marie Lebranchu came back to the miraculou

Grotto to return thanks to her heavenly benefactress. She went to the Medical Office, and there the excellent condition of her lungs was ascertained. I give the exact words of the report written at the time:—

"After a first bath in the piscina (last year), Marie Lebranchu felt suddenly well. At the examination, made at the Medical Office with the greatest care, no trace could be found of the serious disease from which she had suffered. Since then the *cure has been permanent*, in spite of an attack of influenza from which the patient suffered during the winter."[1]

. . . . . .

As she left the office Marie Lebranchu met M. de L—— on the Rosary Esplanade, and chatted with him. M. de L—— had seen her the year before.

"How did you find her?" I afterwards asked him myself.

"How! Why, perfectly well. She has been absolutely cured."

"Did you speak to her in 1892?"

"Yes, several times. I was talking to M. Zola one day when she came up to us and said:

"'Ah, M. Zola, now that I am so well again, I shall leave the hospital, and return to my home in the Rue de Bruxelles. I shall be quite close to you, and as you have been so kind as to be interested in my case, I hope you will come and see me and find out how I am getting on during the winter.'

"'Certainly,' replied Zola, 'I shall make a point of coming.'

"When she returned in 1893, I asked her, 'Well, did M. Zola go to see you in Paris?'

[1] *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxvi. p. 114.

"'Oh, dear, no!' she replied. 'He never came once. And in his novel he makes me have a fearful relapse in the train, and sends me to the hospital to die.'"

. . . . . .

This off-hand manner of deriding truth, and daringly cheating his readers, so upset the president of the Medical Office, that one day, when at Paris, he called on M. Zola, and said to him:

"How did you dare to make Marie Lebranchu die? You know very well that she is as well as you or I."

"What has that got to do with me?" was the audacious reply; "my characters are my own. I can treat them as I like. I can make them live or die as I please. All I have to consider is the interest of my plot."[1]

I do not know what M. Boissarie then replied, but I know very well that he might have said: "If you wished to take such liberties you should not have announced to the world at large that your novel is 'historical.' Nor should you have said in the papers you were going to expose 'the truth, the whole truth, that truth which will profit everybody.'" Once the public have received such promises, they have a right to expect their accomplishment. The author is bound to relate the facts faithfully, even if they are contrary to his personal opinions. If, then, a cured woman who maintains her cure is represented as undergoing a mortal relapse, the case is evidently one of breach of promise and of perjury. And if such a formal attack on truth is judged necessary by the writer to support his thesis, his thesis must evidently be

[1] This conversation was related to me by M. Boissarie himself.

false. The fact of his being obliged to defend it by illicit and inadmissible means, such as mendacious and false assertion, proves that it is indefensible.

. . . . . .

I offer these simple observations to the sincerity of the reader, whatever may be his sentiments on the subject. However opposed one is to a theory, one's attack should at least be conducted on honourable lines. To act otherwise means self-condemnation, for dishonesty is found out sooner or later. It then becomes bad tactics, which compromises the issue of the fray. As M. Talleyrand remarked: "It is more than a crime, it is a mistake." Truth should always be respected. Bad faith is a violation of her august rights.[1]

[1] During his stay at Lourdes in 1892, M. Zola was interviewed by an editor of the *Temps*, who afterwards published his remarks:—

Editor—"Do you believe miracles to be possible?"

M. Zola—"I do; it seems difficult to doubt that doctrine unless you believe in nothing."

Editor—"If you were eye-witness of a real miracle in the especially severe conditions you demand, would you then believe the teachings of Faith?"

M. Zola (after remaining thoughtful for some minutes)—"I *do not know—I do not think so.* It is a question I have not put myself; it is left over."

A prejudice could hardly be stated more clearly. In such conditions, study is useless.

One day when M. Zola, who used to visit Clémentine Trouvé at the hospital, was chatting with her, she was very silent. Suddenly he said: "What is the matter? You say nothing."

"I am praying for you," replied the child.

"Ah well, you are right," he answered; "I need it badly." Perhaps he spoke more truly even than he imagined.

III

MADAME ROUCHEL

I. The disease—II. The cure—III. The impression at Metz—IV. A year after.

I saw Mme. Rouchel for the first time in September 1904, just one year after her cure had taken place.

As in 1903, she had come to Lourdes with the pilgrimage from Metz, and was put up at the Hospital of the Seven Dolours. I called on her, to see with my own eyes the striking miracle wrought on her, and to hear the story from her own lips.

I had to wait for her, for, although my visit had been announced, she had wandered off through the huge hospital so as to avoid me. She frankly admits her dislike of visitors, and had it not been for M. l'Abbé Collin, the head of her pilgrimage, and Sister Sophie, who had so kindly looked after her, I should have sought her in vain.

She came at length, and we sat down at one of the tables in the dining-hall. There were also present the Abbé Collin, Sister Sophie, Mme. Lacroix, a charitable lady from Metz, who had visited her in her own home, and had seen her at the piscinas. A young lady from Metz, who happened to come in, also joined us.

. . . . . .

I watched Mme. Rouchel while she was speaking. She was apparently over fifty,[1] and a strong, healthy countrywoman. Both physically and morally she

[1] She was born at Diebling in 1851. Her maiden name was Thérèse Freymann. She now lives at Metz.

has retained all the traces of her peasant origin. An outspoken candour characterises her unacademical language, which has the one advantage of being picturesque. Her face wears no beauty save that which is imprinted on the exterior of every straightforward and honest soul. Her religion is deep-seated, and her love of God profound.

In 1890 she had just brought her fourth child into the world, when a raving madman rushed into the room where she was lying. He tore down the curtains of her bed, and threatened her with a large knife which he brandished fiercely. The unhappy woman was quite alone in the house. She felt that she was doomed, and in her fright she jumped out of bed, and ran out of the house only half-dressed.

The shock completely ruined her robust health. Her eyes were first affected. In vain she visited the dispensary of the Sisters of Hope. The specialist in charge gave her up. "Your eyes are incurable," he said, "your blood is diseased."

This soon became evident, for pustules formed on the face, and would only disappear to return regularly every month. Finally, they ulcerated and spread over the nose, lips, and mucous membranes of the mouth. Lupus had set in; the whole face was one large sore.

"But, Mère Rouchel," I said to her, "did you not try to cure these sores. Did you not see any doctors?"

"Surely, yes. I saw several. How they hacked me about!"

She had consulted several doctors of the neighbourhood. Among them were the Doctors Bar,

MADAME ROUCHEL, AFTER HER CURE

de Gorge, Maurice, d'Arnaville, Weiss, de Metz, Kramer, de Saint-Julien, Reiss, and many others.

In 1895, Dr. Ernst of Metz, finding her affliction incurable, tried at least to lessen it. But the disease grew worse instead of better. At last Dr. Ernst consulted Dr. Bender, a skin specialist. The latter, frightened at the ravages wrought by the disease in the interior of the mouth, pulled out all the patient's remaining teeth. Then nearly every day for several weeks he cauterised the gums and the mouth with a red-hot iron.

But that long torture effected no cure. Dr. Bender having left Metz for Wiesbaden, Dr. Ernst took his patient to another Metz specialist, Dr. Müller, who also had recourse to cauterisation.

But, as matters did not improve, Dr. Müller one day said to Mme. Rouchel: "We will now wait a little, and see what Nature can do for us."

But Nature did no better than Art. A consultation was then held, and the doctors pronounced the disease to be incurable.

The whole system was upset. From December 1902 to May 1903, the invalid was bed-ridden. Henceforth she became a horrible object to others and to herself. Her face was being eaten away. A disgusting smell kept off her friends; her life became intolerable.

The burden was too heavy to bear, and Mme. Rouchel was filled with despair, Christian though she was. For three days she was determined to commit suicide. She had made up her mind to drown herself, when God sent her a devoted priest who encouraged her, and turned her thoughts to the Gentle Virgin on the banks of the Gave.

Hope came like a ray of light in the midst of a long dark night. The pilgrimage was decided on, and Mme. Rouchel left for Lourdes. She arrived on September 4, 1903.

. . . . . .

The journey was a very difficult one. Sister Sophie, of the Maternal Charity at Metz, was put in charge of the invalid. She was a little woman, active and firm, as well as cheerful. She was one of those admirable nuns who perform heroic acts with smiles on their faces.

"It was you, then, sister, who accompanied Mme. Rouchel," I said to her.

"Yes, sir: what a journey it was, to be sure. The poor woman was well aware of the disgust she inspired. Her face bandage had to be changed every ten minutes, and her store of linen was exhausted before we reached Paris, where we stopped a day and a half. I obtained a fresh supply for her. During our stay in the great city, Mme. Rouchel did not leave the hospital where the pilgrims were lodged. She asked for a room to herself, so as to inconvenience nobody. At night she could not lie down, but remained sitting in a chair near her bed, against which she leant her head.

"Her sister-in-law lived in Paris, but, knowing her state, she was afraid to see her, and asked a stranger to take her a little monetary help. When the poor woman received the money she could not help crying, and saying: 'You see, sister, even my family find me repulsive. Oh, how miserable I am! My own people will not see me.'"

. . . . . .

I interrupted Sister Sophie by saying: "Since

you tended Mme. Rouchel, and dressed her sore, you must have been able to see it closely. Would you mind describing it to me?"

"Oh, it was frightful to look at! the mouth was quite black and all eaten away, and covered by a blackish growth, as prickly as a thorn bush, which emitted a horrible stench. The upper lip, drawn up to the nostrils, was ulcerated and covered with scabs, from which oozed a noisome fluid. On the right cheek, an inch or so from the mouth, was a hole, through which any liquid food escaped; it had to be closed with a plug."

"Are you quite sure about this hole, sister—did you really see it?"

"I not only saw it, but, the indiarubber plug put in at Metz having been lost, I made one of cotton wool, and put it in myself to prevent any liquid from coming through."

"Was the plug large?"

"As large as my little finger, which could easily enter the mouth through the hole which the ulcer had formed."

"I have read, too, that another purulent hole existed in the palate. Did you see that also, sister?"

"Perfectly. It was a much longer one. It was a fifth of an inch wide, but at least three times as long. All round was like a pad of suppurating flesh. This hole served as a passage to the matter which could not pass by the nostrils, and which thus fell into the mouth. A priest belonging to Mme. Rouchel's parish, M. l'Abbé Hamann, also saw this fearful hole several times."

"That is quite correct," then said M. l'Abbé

Collin; "he wrote a letter to me about it, which I published at the time. His description exactly tallies with Sister Sophie's."[1]

I then asked the director of the pilgrimage whether the patient's doctor had attested these details in an authentic certificate.

"Certainly," he replied; "Dr. Ernst gave a certificate after the cure. Here is what he said about Mme. Rouchel's condition when she left for Lourdes: 'I saw Mme. Rouchel for the first time in 1895, and I ascertained that she was suffering from facial lupus, which especially affected the nose and upper lip. Every remedy employed (iodide of potassium, &c.) was ineffectual in overcoming the disease. In the same way the treatment resorted to by the specialist Dr. Bender, such as antiseptics and cauterisation, were equally futile, and during 1899 the *palate became perforated;* the same happened to the right cheek in 1901. Eleven days before her departure for Lourdes in August 1903, the invalid was a lamentable object because of the deformation and ravages, which had reached the nose, interiorly and exteriorly, the upper lip, the right cheek, and the palate. There was always a perforation at the juncture of the hard and soft portions of the palate, and also in the right cheek about an inch or more from the corner of the mouth. The nose and the upper lip were much impaired and covered by fœtid matter.'"

. . . . . .

This was the loathsome disease from which Mme. Rouchel was suffering when she reached Lourdes on September 4th, at six o'clock in the morning.

[1] See Appendix, Note 19, p. 542, Fr. ed.

She wished to go to the Grotto immediately, and did so accompanied by two pilgrims from Farschwiller, Mlles. Josephine and Marie Risse.

"What happened at the Grotto?" I asked.

"I knelt down. Then I asked the Blessed Virgin to take away this fearful burden. I told her that, if I must be punished for my sins, at least let the disease be on my leg, and let my face be cleansed of those hideous sores which horrify everybody."

Having prayed thus, the invalid got up and went to bathe her face at the miraculous fountain. During the day she thought that her sores suppurated somewhat less freely.

The next day she went to confession and Holy Communion in the hospital chapel, and returned full of hope to the Grotto.

She said to herself: "When I leave the Grotto or the piscinas to-day, I shall be cured."

But she was mistaken. She was not cured either in the piscinas or at the Grotto.

. . . . . .

In the piscina she found Mme. Lacroix. A fortnight before Mme. Lacroix and her daughters had called on her at Metz.

"She did not dare lift up her head," relates this lady. "She said—and it was with great difficulty that we could hear her words—'If I took off the bandage from my face you would run away.'"

The kindly infirmarian saw this fearful face on the morning of Saturday, September 5th.

"I was in the piscina for foot-baths (as it is called), when Mme. Rouchel came in, wishing to bathe her face. I offered to do it for her, but she would not let me.

"I was then able to see all the horror of that mouth. The upper lip was drawn up and swollen so as completely to obstruct the nostrils, and on this lip there were swellings dotted with white.

"On the right-hand side of the mouth was a hole from which oozed matter. It was frightful.

"I saw the unhappy woman wash herself, rinse her sponge—the water had become an indescribable colour—take a mouthful of water from the basin to rinse her mouth . . . all done simply and quickly so as to avoid being seen. On going, we gave her a clean piece of linen, for her own was saturated with matter."

Mme. Lacroix still shudders when she recalls this horrible sight.

Thus, about midday on Saturday, Sept. 5th, the poor woman's cheek was still perforated and her face covered with horrible sores which suppurated freely.

At one o'clock Sister Mechtilde at the Lourdes hospital dressed the ulcer, and again saw the hideous spectacle. "I again noticed," she says, "in the right cheek a hole as big as my little finger."

. . . . . .

A few hours later, towards five o'clock, the procession of the Blessed Sacrament was on the point of finishing. Mme. Rouchel had not dared to go on the Rosary Esplanade with the other sick people who were praying to be cured, for she knew how disgusting was her appearance.

She had taken refuge in the Church of the Holy Rosary, whither the Blessed Sacrament is carried after the procession. To be alone, she had retired behind the high altar. In the distance resounded

the people's prayer: "Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst cure me. Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us."

No doubt she repeated to herself the prayer of the publican in the temple, who did not dare to raise his eyes to heaven: "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

Just then the Bishop of Saint-Dié re-entered the church carrying the monstrance.

Suddenly, without any apparent cause, the bandage which covered the woman's face came off and fell on her prayer book, which remained soiled with pus and blood.

She quickly picked it up, all ashamed at having been seen with her face uncovered. Then, having tied it up again with a double knot, she went towards the Grotto, praying.

At the taps whence flows the miraculous water, as she leant over to drink, the bandage fell off again.

Astonished and cross, she readjusted it as best she might, and returned grumbling to the hospital.

. . . . . .

Shortly after, Sister Romaine, of the Metz Maternity, found her in the corner of a room, and expressed her surprise that she should have no bandage on.

"I have put it on several times, sister," was the reply; "and it keeps falling off."

"Madame Rouchel," then cried the nun, looking at her more closely, "why, you are cured!"

Then Sister Sophie arrived.

"Ah, sister!" said the invalid, "my bandage was badly tied, and I was cross when I saw it come off."

"Let us see," said the nun.

But before she could express her astonishment,

her eyes filled with tears. "Madame Rouchel, Madame Rouchel, praise God and Our Lady, your sores are healed! There is no need to put your bandage on again."

On hearing these words, the poor woman was completely dazed. She thought she was dreaming, and could not express her joy. Everybody was deeply moved.

"What a moment!" said Sister Sophie, turning to me; "I shall never forget it. I looked at the face which, when I had dressed it a few hours before, had lost all semblance to humanity. And now I could look at it without any feeling of disgust.

"The nostrils were free. The upper lip had returned to its normal shape and size, having diminished by quite two-thirds. All the suppurating boils, which had made one large sore of the face, were completely dried up."

"And what about the hole in the cheek?"

"It was no longer there. My cotton-wool plug had disappeared; it must have fallen with the bandage in the church where the miracle had taken place."

"So much for the outside, sister, but what about the inside, which was the seat of the disease. Are you sure that that had also been changed instantaneously?"

"Quite sure. I opened her mouth at once to see what it was like. I cannot tell you the impression I received. From the filthy condition in which it had been, with boils and pus oozing from every side, it had now become quite normal. All that remained was a vivid colouring, which disappeared within three days. The suppuration had suddenly ceased inside as well as out."

"You do not mention the mattery hole in the palate: what had happened to that?"

"It had disappeared like the one in the cheek. Our Lady had suddenly closed it, and it was no more to be seen. I must add, too, that on the following morning, as I was helping Mme. Rouchel to dress, I noticed a fresh scar on her back, about the size of a five-franc piece."

"'What is that, Mère Rouchel?' I asked.

"'It is a sore which suppurates like the others. Dr. M—— wanted to dress it, but I would not let him, for I knew it was useless. How is it now?'

"'How is it, Mère Rouchel? Why, healed up just like the others.'"

Sister Mechtilde, who had been busy in other wards, had not heard of the cure. She came to renew the dressing, but Mme. Rouchel thanked her; she had no further need of a bandage. "On the morrow," writes this sister, "I examined the face, and found that the lips, nostrils, and cheek were in their natural state; the hole in the cheek had closed up."

Meanwhile, the news had been rapidly spread abroad. Several of the pilgrims from Lorraine came to see the "*miraculée*." The Bishop of Saint-Dié also came, and insisted that Mme. Rouchel should go to the Medical Office to report her cure. She would rather have remained alone to enjoy her new happiness unobserved.

The doctors minutely examined and cross-questioned her, in the presence of many spectators: "They all crowded round me as if I were a criminal," said Mme. Rouchel.

Dr. Ernst's certificate was read, and his descrip-

tion compared with the then present condition of the face and mouth. It was found that the sores had desiccated, and that all suppuration had ceased.

"As to the perforations in the palate and right cheek," I was recently told again by Dr. Boissarie, "they no longer existed."

All that remained was a certain redness of the skin, and a slight ulceration on the inside of the upper lip.

. . . . . .

Something similar often takes place at Lourdes. The disease leaves some slight trace of its previous existence. It is God's hall-mark of cure.

Mme. Rouchel, with her simple, straightforward Christian soul, seemed to understand this intuitively. On her departure she paid a farewell visit to the Grotto. There she prayed aloud, and Sister Sophie quite distinctly heard her prayer. Part of it was as follows:—

"I am leaving you, O my Mother, but I want to thank you, and I shall always thank you. Through you I have lost that frightful disease. The trace that remains does not make me suffer, so leave it always, if you please. *It will make me happy.* For it will be the proof of the terrible evil you have taken away."

Finding these words very beautiful in their simplicity, I said to Mme. Rouchel, in front of the sister who had heard and repeated them:

"Did you really say that?"

"Yes," she replied; "that is what I said."

But, as her answer was given somewhat defiantly, I added: "I do not blame you, Mère Rouchel. I do not blame you at all."

With her usual blunt outspokenness, she replied: "And if you did blame me, I should say it again."

. . . . . .

I must admit that I was much pleased with this touch of humour, a sign of deep and determined convictions; so I continued the conversation.

"Mère Rouchel, why do you always say that you are the greatest sinner in the all world? What wicked thing can you have done, you who are so good a Christian?"

She reflected a few seconds, and then, with her usual contempt for conventionalities, she replied: "Do you really want to know? Well, I'll tell you."

"No, no," I exclaimed, changing my mind, for I knew she was quite capable of making a detailed public confession, and I was ignorant of what she might have to tell us.

The young lady from Lorraine, who had been listening to our conversation, suddenly fled like a scared bird.

. . . . . .

The little town of Lourdes was soon full of the event. Every one wanted to see the marks of those dreadful gaping holes suddenly closed by the Blessed Virgin.

Even the hardest and most stubborn were struck by this instantaneous creation of organic tissues. A thorough man of the world who had accompanied his wife to Lourdes, merely to please her, was particularly impressed.

He had happened to see Mme. Rouchel at the Grotto, and had noticed her hideous sores. When he heard that she had been cured he was profoundly

touched. He could not have been more upset had a thunderbolt suddenly dropped at his feet. He was very anxious to see Mme. Rouchel after her cure, and she was with much difficulty persuaded to go to his hotel.

"Well, Mère Rouchel, and what did he say to you?"

"He said, 'Are you the woman with the bad face I saw at the Grotto?'

"'Yes, I am.'

"Then he looked at my face, and made me open my mouth and looked inside. As I was leaving he said: 'I hardly ever went to church, but in future I shall always go, and I shall practise my religion as long as I live, as I ought to have done before.' Then he squeezed my hand hard, and I saw that he was crying."[1]

. . . . . .

Three days after the cure, when the Metz pilgrimage left Lourdes, all France was ringing with the news. The cure created a profound impression on all who heard of it.

The pilgrims reached Cette in the evening. Two doctors of the town met the train at the station, and made inquiries for Mme. Rouchel. She was certainly going to receive them with her usual bluntness, but she was made to understand that it would be a good deed to receive them with kindness.

"They had a lamp," she explained to me, "with something to direct the light. They both looked at me, and examined my cheek."

Then she added in her quaint patois of Lorraine,

[1] We have discovered since that this gentleman was M—— A—— of Bordeaux. He has kept his word, and is a fervent Catholic.

"One of them looked into my mouth, and rummaged his fingers all round."

"And what did they say?"

"That they were amazed."

"'Ah!' said the one who had examined me the most, 'you may well cry, Long live Our Lady of Lourdes! I would like all my colleagues to be here to see you.'"

. . . . . .

Two days later they reached Metz, in the morning. Mme. Rouchel's family had been told of the cure, but they could not believe it.

The children were at the station waiting for their mother. At first they failed to recognise her. They were looking for a woman with her face bandaged. She went up to them, and said: "Look at me. It is really I. It is quite true. I am cured."

M. Rouchel, who was a carpenter, and away at his work, had been incredulous when told of the cure. In the evening, when he came home and saw his wife, he was quite dumbfounded. In his surprise he let his hammer fall on the ground.

On retiring for the night, he asked his wife, "Where is the sore you had on your shoulders?"

"I left it at Lourdes," she replied, "with my other sores."

She slept well, although for months she had not been able to sleep or even lie down. She spoke easily, ate anything whether hot or cold, all of which had been impossible before the pilgrimage.

. . . . . .

Of course it was necessary for the doctors to express an opinion. Dr. M——, who had tended

Mme. Rouchel at one time, examined her lips, her mouth, and her throat.

"Whatever have you done?" he asked. "What remedies have you used?"

"None at all, doctor, except Lourdes water." Then she added, with a touch of irony, "I brought some away with me, and could let you have some if you want it."

"Who was your doctor yonder?"

"I had none. It was not the doctors who cured me, but the Blessed Virgin."

As for Dr. Ernst, the patient's ordinary physician, he was much impressed, and his wife relates how he returned home pale and refusing to eat. He could speak of nothing but this cure.

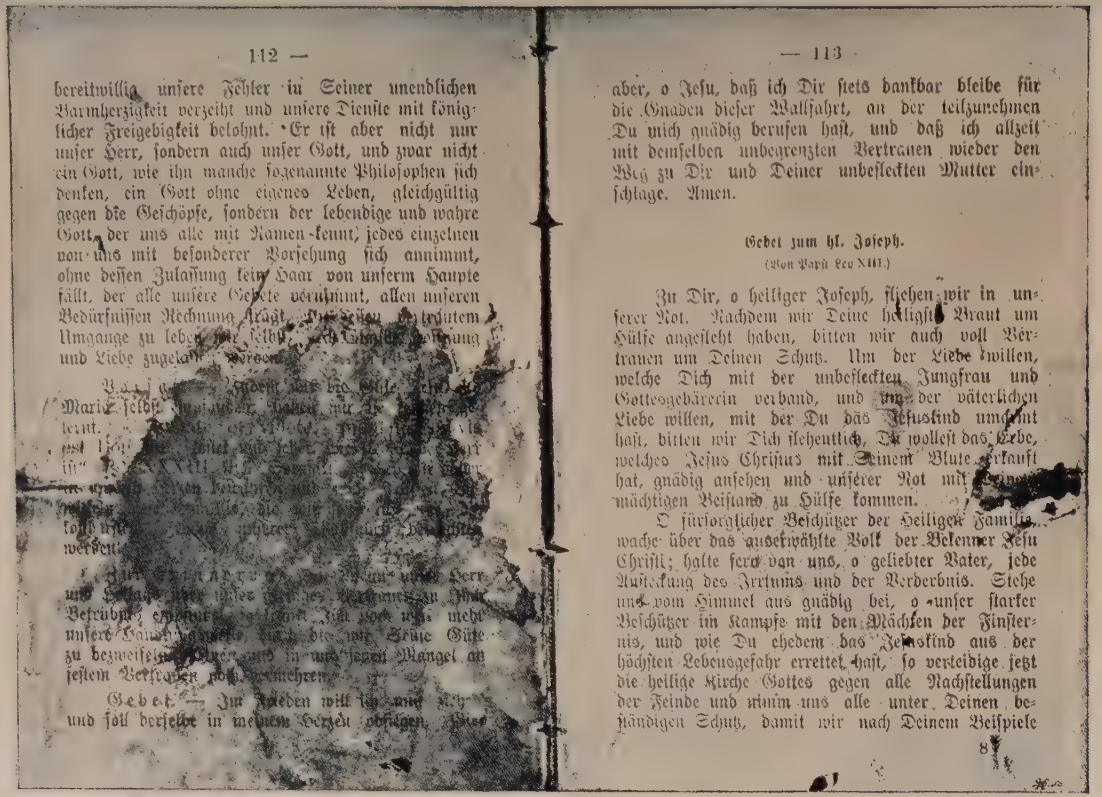
Three and a half months later, on December 22, 1903, when time had confirmed the first results, he wrote a certificate, part of which ran as follows:—

"I saw Mme. Rouchel *five days* after her return from Lourdes. Her condition had been completely changed. The redness had nearly disappeared, *the perforations of the cheek and palate were closed.* Just outside the perforation of the cheek there was a red spot about as large as a lentil. The lip which had been the most ulcerated was covered with a beautiful new skin; the swelling had been reduced by two-thirds; there was scarcely any trace of the ulceration, and the outlines of the former inflammation were vaguely marked by scars."

. . . . . .

The neighbourhood of Mme. Rouchel's home was in an uproar about this wonderful case. The police had to intervene, and Mme. Rouchel was begged to step up to the police station.

There were five or six agents assembled, one of



bereitwillig unsere Fehler in Seiner unendlichen Barmherzigkeit verzeiht und unsere Dienste mit königlicher Freigebigkeit belohnt. Er ist aber nicht nur unser Herr, sondern auch unser Gott, und zwar nicht ein Gott, wie ihn manche sogenannte Philosophen sich denken, ein Gott ohne eigenes Leben, gleichgültig gegen die Geschöpfe, sondern der lebendige und wahre Gott, der uns alle mit Namen kennt, jedes einzelnen von uns mit besonderer Vorsehung sich annimmt, ohne dessen Zulassung kein Haar von unserm Haupte fällt, der alle unsere Gebete vernimmt, allen unseren Bedürfnissen Rechnung trägt, [illegible] vertrautem Umgange zu leben [illegible] und Liebe zugelassen [illegible]

[illegible] Maria selbst [illegible] lernt. [illegible] ist [illegible] XXXIII [illegible] werden [illegible]

[illegible] unser Herr und [illegible] Betrübnis [illegible] unsere [illegible] Seine Güte zu bezweifeln [illegible] und in uns jenen Mangel an festem Vertrauen [illegible] vermehren.

Gebet. — Im Frieden will ich [illegible] und soll derselbe in meinem Herzen obsiegen. [illegible]

aber, o Jesu, daß ich Dir stets dankbar bleibe für die Gnaden dieser Wallfahrt, an der teilzunehmen Du mich gnädig berufen hast, und daß ich allzeit mit demselben unbegrenzten Vertrauen wieder den Weg zu Dir und Deiner unbefleckten Mutter einschlage. Amen.

Gebet zum hl. Joseph.

(Von Papst Leo XIII.)

Zu Dir, o heiliger Joseph, fliehen wir in unserer Not. Nachdem wir Deine heiligste Braut um Hülfe angefleht haben, bitten wir auch voll Vertrauen um Deinen Schutz. Um der Liebe willen, welche Dich mit der unbefleckten Jungfrau und Gottesgebärerin verband, und um der väterlichen Liebe willen, mit der Du das Jesuskind umfaßt hast, bitten wir Dich flehentlich, Du wollest das Erbe, welches Jesus Christus mit Seinem Blute erkauft hat, gnädig ansehen und unserer Not mit Deinem mächtigen Beistand zu Hülfe kommen.

O fürsorglicher Beschützer der Heiligen Familie, wache über das auserwählte Volk der Bekenner Jesu Christi; halte fern von uns, o geliebter Vater, jede Ansteckung des Irrtums und der Verderbnis. Stehe uns vom Himmel aus gnädig bei, o unser starker Beschützer im Kampfe mit den Mächten der Finsternis, und wie Du ehedem das Jesuskind aus der höchsten Lebensgefahr errettet hast, so verteidige jetzt die heilige Kirche Gottes gegen alle Nachstellungen der Feinde und nimm uns alle unter Deinen beständigen Schutz, damit wir nach Deinem Beispiele

MADAME ROUCHEL'S PRAYER BOOK SOILED WITH BLOOD AND MATTER BY THE BANDAGE WHICH FELL ON IT AT THE MOMENT OF HER CURE

whom questioned the good woman. It was a reproduction of the scene in the Gospel of the man born blind. Humanity remains ever the same. Mme. Rouchel replied to the Metz police somewhat after the manner of the blind man to the Pharisees:

"What do you want me to say? How can I tell how it has happened? I only know that I was ill, very ill, that no doctor could cure me, but that over yonder I found a doctor to cure me. For I am well cured. Look at me!"

The blind man in the Gospel had said: "One thing I know, that whereas I was blind now I see" (St. John ix. 25).

This took place in September. The police evidently thought that the disease would return, for two months after, on November 25th, one Sunday at eight in the evening, a police agent called at Mme. Rouchel's house. She was already in bed, but hearing his voice she called out: "Is that you again? What do you want?"

"I have come to see if you are still cured."

Mme. Rouchel speedily sent him about his business in language more forcible than polite.

. . . . . .

The Association of Doctors at Metz also took up the case. They begged her to be present at one of their gatherings.

"And did you go, Mère Rouchel?"

"I didn't want to go before all those Jews and Protestants, but he made me," and she pointed to M. l'Abbé Collin, who smiled.

"And what did they say to you?"

"They said that I was not really cured."

There remained, as we have seen, a slight ulceration inside the upper lip. She had asked Our Lady

to leave her this paregoric trace of a fearful disease as a tangible and permanent proof of her cure.

On reaching Metz, Dr. R—— had suggested treating this slight inflammation, for it appeared to be a simple matter.

"No, no," she replied, "it is a good thing if my lip remains in this condition."

Evidently the free-thinkers of Metz were in a mood to dispute the question. But this question was not whether a slight inflammation of the lip remained, but whether the two perforations which had existed in the cheek and roof of the mouth before going to Lourdes had been suddenly closed on Saturday, September 5th. Did they exist or did they not exist on the patient's return to Metz?

That is the point. It is a very easy one to settle, and these good gentlemen may wander from it as much as they like; we shall always bring them back to it.

The facts exist, and cannot be denied. One must either explain them naturally, or be courageous enough to admit that they are caused by God.

Time has confirmed the cure. Mme. Rouchel has enjoyed perfect health ever since the miracle. She returned to Lourdes in 1904, and I saw her at the Medical Office. She was delighted with herself, and said:

"If they gave me the whole town of Metz, I would not be again what I used to be."

Very often she says: "I used to be the unhappiest of women; now I am the happiest, thanks to Our Lady. May her name be praised!"[1]

[1] As I was preparing the eighth edition of this book in September 1905, I saw Mme. Rouchel at Lourdes; she was perfectly well.

IV

GABRIEL GARGAM

Behold that finely built gentleman hospitaller, his clear-cut features, blue eyes, pointed beard, and a bald forehead notwithstanding his youth. Look at him well, for he has been snatched from the jaws of death.

He was brought here some years ago lying motionless and insensible on a stretcher, like a corpse. But he suddenly quitted his sepulchral couch; like Lazarus, he arose well and radiant with life. He has since devoted his life to the service of the sick who go to the Grotto to find a miraculous cure for their infirmities.

All who know Lourdes know him by name—Gabriel Gargam.

I wanted to see him before telling his story, but to do so I had literally to take him by force from the piscinas, where he was attending the sick.

"I cannot come," he objected. "There's a miserable wretch here who comes twice a day to be bathed. He is covered with suppurating sores, and when he is undressed he has to be cleaned like a baby in arms. I have a strong stomach, and can stand anything; if I come away I am afraid there will be no one to take my place."

I had to appeal to the chief to overcome his charitable obstinacy, and Gargam had to leave his beloved sick in other hands to come and talk to me.

This is the story he told.

. . . . . .

On December 17, 1899, Gabriel Gargam, who was a travelling Post-office clerk, took the express

from Bordeaux to Paris at half-past ten in the evening. The carriage, in which he travelled with three companions, was the last but one in the train.

They briskly set to work. Gargam was not yet thirty. As a pupil of the Angoulême Grammar School, he had passed his examinations well; he was now preparing for a higher Post-office examination, which would entitle him to a good post in the service.

His father, an old Breton hailing from Brest, was employed as a naval officer at the cannon foundry at Ruelle near Angoulême. The child was born there.

When grown to man's estate, Gabriel wished to follow in the footsteps of his father, and to succeed in the profession he had chosen for himself.

On this particular evening it was bitterly cold, and one of his companions went to the stove to warm himself. Just then they all felt the train stop.

They were not far from Angoulême, and on the verge of an incline. The engine-driver, evidently owing to some break in the machinery, could not get the engine to move. It was half-an-hour past midnight, and very dark. To make matters worse, the train had just passed a corner, so that an oncoming train could not see the rear-lights.

"Hardly had we stopped," relates Gargam, "when we heard a dull rumbling sound from behind us. It was the express which had left Bordeaux ten minutes after us, and which was now catching us up at the rate of fifty miles an hour. We had about two seconds to realise our horrible danger, when . . .

"Then I discovered nothing more. I only know what I have been told."

. . . . . .

The next morning the woman who always brought the daily paper to Mme. Gargam, said: "The paper is not very interesting to-day. But Madame has perhaps heard of the dreadful railway accident which happened last night quite close to our town?"

"A railway accident!" cried Mme. Gargam, a vague fear creeping into her heart. "What train was it?"

The paper-woman's answer came slowly and deliberately. She did not know what was in Mme. Gargam's mind.

"What train? Why, the express! it collided with another express coming on behind. Several people are killed, and they are taking the wounded to the hospital. They say that the four Post-office officials . . ."

She stopped, for Mme. Gargam had fallen into a chair, fainting. She knew that her son was to have been on duty that night. Of course he was dead.

The unhappy mother hastened to the hospital, and there she found her son just regaining consciousness.

His carriage had been smashed to pieces. The tremendous shock of the impact had stretched the express engine panting on its side, the end carriages of the front train were jammed and crushed, and the four Post-office clerks had been thrown out and horribly wounded. Gargam had fallen 55 feet away in the snow, where he had remained unconscious and almost buried until seven in the morning.

Then began a time of agony for him, lasting for more than twenty months. He had wounds all over his head and legs, and his collar-bone was fractured.

The fracture and the wounds healed fairly quickly, but the terrible shock of the accident had caused

disastrous internal disorders. He was paralysed from the waist downwards, and it was almost impossible for him to take nourishment.

The poor mother went daily to see him in the hospital, whence he could not be removed. The Superioress, seeing that the case was hopeless, spoke to her of resignation and the hope of meeting her son in a future life. Mme. Gargam spent her days in crying and trying to hide her tears from her son, and from her husband, who was a man of eighty-six.

When the latter had heard the news of his son's accident, he had fallen on his knees and prayed long and silently.

"My father," says his son, when speaking of him, 'was certainly not antagonistic to religion or to her ministers. But, led by circumstances and environment, he had given up going to church. His faith was latent, and this shock aroused it."

What prayer did the unhappy father address to God in his misery? Did his old Breton heart ask pardon for his great neglect? Did he ask God to spare the support of his failing years?

Mme. Gargam, hiding her own anguish, employed every possible delicate ruse to sustain the confidence of her husband.

The wounded man grew daily worse. For the first fortnight he was unable to take any nourishment save a few slices of orange, which he managed to suck. Finally, on January 1, 1900, he ate an egg, but was still unable to take sufficient nourishment. Eight months after the accident he was unable to take any nourishment at all. Dr. Decressac, head of the Angoulême Hospital, tried baths as a cure, but the necessary jolting and moving only aggravated

the patient's condition. A tube was then resorted to. This was the cause of such intolerable suffering, that it could only be used once in twenty-four hours.

In these conditions, exhaustion reduced the wounded man to a skeleton. The whole of the lower portion of his body was insensible and rigid. Although a tall man, he only weighed about 78 lbs. When his calves were measured at Lourdes in 1901, one was 24 centimetres (9½ inches) round, and the other 23 centimetres (9⅛ inches). The thigh just above the knee was only 26 centimetres (10⅛ inches) in circumference.

. . . . . .

The Orleans Railway Company were being sued for damages, and Dr. Decressac had been called upon to furnish a report on the state of the injured man. His very detailed report is dated December 19, 1900.

The chief symptoms noted were—paralysis with contraction, anæsthesia of the legs, and also what doctors call exaggeration of the tendon reflexes, especially in the beginning; epileptoid trembling of the foot; very pronounced muscular atrophy of the lower limbs, and redness, with a tendency to bed sores in the lower regions of the back. The head physician of the Angoulême Hospital concluded in these words:—

"All these symptoms have appeared gradually; they constitute an affection of the spinal cord called amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. This diagnosis appeared to me to be the correct one, to the exclusion of other diseases, such as compression of the cord or hysterotraumatism."

The learned doctor adds that this condition

"constituted a permanent infirmity, hardly susceptible of improvement, and more likely to terminate fatally."

He was right, for six months after, a supplementary report being needed, he had to state that Gargam was worse. "The conclusions remain the same," he wrote, "with regard to the incurability of the disease and its progressive development."

A further complication ensued. One day the infirmarian noticed that the extremities of the feet were black. He thought at first that this was due to want of cleanliness, and rubbed the foot a little. He was much surprised to see the skin fall off, and the pus ooze out.

It was gangrene! As it was useless to try to overcome the disease, which was incurable, and as the patient did not suffer from it in any way, it was deemed sufficient to place a cradle over the feet to prevent them from coming into contact with the sheets.[1]

. . . . . .

The suit for damages was wending its weary way. The doctors of the Orleans Railway Company had been to see Gargam, and had offered him an annual pension of 3000 francs.

But the civil courts, having taken the advice of the doctors who had examined Gargam, announced on February 20, 1901, that the offer made by the company was ridiculous in view of the lamentable condition of the patient. They declared that Gargam should not be expected to spend his days in a hospital or home, but that means should be provided for him to rent a suitable house, to pay for at least two trained nurses, and to call in the

[1] See Appendix, Note 20, p. 544, Fr. ed.

services of a doctor when necessary. Further, as the company had reduced him to the most pitiable of states, and had made of him *a perfect wreck of humanity*, with only his intelligence left unimpaired, they condemned the railway company to pay him an annual pension of 6000 francs for life, and an indemnity of 60,000 francs.

The civil courts recognised the fact that Gargam was an invalid for life. The company's agent at Angoulême went still further. He visited the invalid, examined the medical reports, and then advised the company to offer 12,000 francs per annum for life without indemnity. He declared that the company would gain thereby, for Gargam was certain to die soon.

But the company refused, and decided to appeal to the Bordeaux courts. They soon repented of their action, for the court decided in favour of the injured man, and added further that the pension should be paid in arrears from the day of the accident.

Finally, after some further delay, the railway company acquiesced, and agreed to pay both pension and indemnity.[1]

. . . . . .

Gargam's future was assured. But was there to be any future for him? Every day he grew worse, as Dr. Decressac had declared he would do. Gargam was in despair. His life was broken up, and there seemed no hope or consolation anywhere.

It was fifteen years since he had entered a church. The aumonier of the college and the hospital chaplain used to visit him, but he made no secret of his want of faith. His poor mother, who would so gladly

[1] See Appendix, Note 20, p. 546, Fr. ed.

have seen him a good Catholic, did not dare mention the subject.

One day some one happened to speak in his presence of Lourdes and the wonders that took place there. No doubt it was with the hope that he would entertain the idea of going, but he utterly scorned it. He well knew that his friends and relations were praying for him. One of his aunts had been a Sacred Heart nun at Angoulême. Doubtless she prayed for him in heaven. At the same time many of his old companions made a spiritual conspiracy to ask God for his conversion, if not his cure. One of his cousins especially, a nun at Orthez, prayed for him, with the whole community.

. . . . . .

God at length answered these appeals. The second house surgeon, Dr. Tessier, wished Gargam to undergo an operation on the vertebræ to relieve the compression. He absolutely refused, and preferred to leave the hospital.

He thought it far better to die among his own people, and to wait for death away from that ward where he had spent twenty such weary months.

The National Pilgrimage was just about to start for Lourdes. Overcome by the instances of his mother and family, he finally consented to go too. He even confessed and communicated, as is the custom of starting pilgrims.

. . . . . .

Three days later he was in the train for Lourdes. It certainly was a most daring adventure. For more than eighteen months he had not left his bed at the hospital; the lower portion of his body was as good

as dead; as for the upper part, he fainted and seemed ready to die at the least movement.

A stretcher was made to fit the carriage-doorway and a mattress was placed on it. A piece of wood, fixed vertically at one end, prevented the sheet from touching the gangrenous feet. The œsophagian tube was taken to feed the patient, and thus they started.

The horses were made to walk all the way to the station, but, in spite of every precaution against shock or jolting, Gargam had a fainting fit which lasted over an hour. Three people accompanied him —his mother, his nurse, and a friend of the family.

When this singular procession reached their carriage they found a traveller there, who has related the scene.[1]

This was M—— V——, a radical municipal councillor of a large midland town. He was also going to Lourdes, but purely from curiosity. He wished to see that famous National Pilgrimage so much talked about, and the supposed invalids who were said to be cured at the Grotto.

When he reached Angoulême he saw, on the platform, three people carrying a litter. He was just wondering to himself whither they might be taking their burden, when they stopped where he was, and, to his astonishment, carried their stretcher, with an apparently dead man on it, into his carriage.

A strong smell of phenol and iodoform filled the carriage. M—— V—— had wanted to see a sick person, but he found that he saw this one at too close quarters. So, taking his hat, he hurried out of the carriage. He went no farther, however, than the next

[1] See *Le Courrier de la Vienne et des Deux-Sevres* for August 26 and 27, 1901.

compartment, and there he came across another traveller to whom he related his adventure. His curiosity had been so much aroused that he stationed himself near the glass door between the two compartments. From here he was able to watch the invalid.

. . . . . .

Thus watched by a determined sceptic equally averse to diseases as to miracles, Gabriel Gargam reached Lourdes on August 20th, at seven o'clock in the morning.

Just before entering the station, his mother showed him from afar the great crucifix which is on the hill of the calvary.

"There is Lourdes, my son; salute Our Lord, and ask Him to cure you."

But the young man had not the courage to make this act of faith. He turned his head away from the great crucifix.

On his arrival he was immediately taken to the Grotto. There he was to receive Holy Communion in the same way that he had done at Angoulême, with a tiny particle of the Host.

His faith was still confused, hesitating, and uncertain. He acted less from belief than because he had given his word of honour. Moreover, there was no fervour, no emotion in his heart. His mind remained free, cold, and perfectly under his own control; he would not allow himself to be influenced in any way.

. . . . . .

Suddenly, after receiving Holy Communion, he felt himself transformed by some interior force. He was seized with a great longing to pray, yet no prayer would pass his lips—sobs were choking him.

God's grace and faith had entered his heart, as the sun's rays penetrate a dark room through the first inlet they find, filling it with light and life.

He even thought he felt a tingling in his paralysed legs. But that was an illusion.

That afternoon at two o'clock he was carried to the piscinas. He was there gently slid off a bare plank into the miraculous water. Then only did he find strength to pray, and aloud he said the accustomed petitions:

"My Mother, take pity on us!"

"Our Lady of Lourdes, cure us!"

"Health of the Sick, pray for us!"

But God did not seem to hear. At four o'clock, as he lay on his stretcher waiting for the Blessed Sacrament to pass, he seemed paler and more exhausted than usual. The fatigue of the journey and the emotions of the day had used up all his strength.

Suddenly he lost consciousness. The people round were terrified at the sight of his blue face. They touched him, and found him cold.

"He must be taken away," said some one. "It would not do to let him die here before all these sick people—it would upset them too much."

And they were just about to carry him off when one of his own people cried out: "No, let him stay. If he dies I will cover his face, and no one will notice."

. . . . . .

Shortly after, the sick man opened his eyes, and regained consciousness. He thought that all was over, and was feeling very desolate when he heard the murmur of supplicating voices.

It was like the call of the clarion awakening him after a long night to life and light.

He tried to raise himself up on his hands, which he had not done for twenty months. He fell back, but would have tried again, had not some one prevented him.

He insisted, however, and begged to be assisted to get off the stretcher to which he had been as nailed for so long. He stood up with his bare feet and only a shirt on; he looked like a dead man in a shroud come out of his grave. He followed the Blessed Sacrament for a short way only, for his friends obliged him to return to his stretcher. Every one in the immense crowd was staring at him, and the excitement became intense.

In one minute a dying man, exhausted by twenty months of suffering and artificial feeding, had recovered sensibility and movement.

There remained no trace of paralysis; he felt his throat enlarge and the pangs of hunger invade his poor ruined stomach. Life returned with a bound to this almost decayed organism, and lit up the wretched man's livid features with a ray of light and joy.

. . . . . .

Immediately after the procession, Gargam was taken to the Medical Office to be examined.

"His entrance into the office," says Dr. Boissarie, "was one of the most touching sights we ever beheld. Sixty doctors were present, counting hospital surgeons, professors, foreigners; also many representatives of papers, believers and sceptics.

"Gargam arrived on his stretcher wrapped in a long dressing-gown, followed by his mother, his

nurse, and several ladies from the hospital. He got up in our presence looking like a ghost.

"His large staring eyes were the only living spots in his emaciated, discoloured face; he was bald like an old man, yet he was barely thirty-two years old." [1]

The crowd was so great and so excited, that Gargam's examination had to be postponed until the following day.

. . . . . .

Meanwhile what had become of M—— V——?

He had lost sight of his unfortunate travelling companion since the evening before. In the afternoon, during the procession of the Blessed Sacrament, he looked for him among the crowd, and discovered him lying a few yards off.

"I watched him carefully," he relates; "he was still lying on his stretcher. The Blessed Sacrament is presented to each sick person, and as my sick friend waited his turn I looked at him again.

"When the priest turned the Blessed Sacrament in his direction he suddenly got up, and cried out, 'I am cured!' The general excitement was tremendous. He was obliged to return to his stretcher because he was not dressed.

"Directly afterwards they took him to the Medical Office. There, thanks to the card which M. de Beauchamp so kindly procured for me, I was able to follow him, and I could ascertain for myself, as did the doctors, that there had existed some sores on M. Gargam's body, especially on his feet, and that these sores had all the recent marks of healing."

Thus even this sceptic admits that the gangrene

[1] *Annales de N. D. de Lourdes*, vol. xxxiv. p. 322.

had suddenly disappeared, and that the feet had become healthy.[1]

When Gargam was back at the hospital, far away from the crowd and alone with his mother,

[1] Here is the narrative by a Jewish witness, as it appeared in the *Daily Mail*:—

"The golden pyx glittered in the rays of a burning sun when, from the lips of a man prostrate at my feet on a stretcher, escaped an inarticulate cry, and from the mouth of a woman near the pallet an exclamation stifled by sobs, 'Holy Mother of God, I thank thee!'

"The man stretched on the litter seized the sides of it with hands which seemed to be claws, so thin were they, and with a convulsive movement struggled up until he was in a sitting posture.

"'Help me!' he groaned, while two big tears rolled down his emaciated cheeks on to his beard. 'I can walk: I feel that I can!' Eager hands helped him on to his feet, and there he was upright before us, like a man risen from the dead, without hat, without trousers, only having on a night-shirt and a dressing-gown. 'Let me walk!' he cried again, in a strange and hollow voice.

"'Hear him, Blessed Virgin, hear him!' sobbed his mother. 'He has not spoken out loud for twenty months!' And in the sight of thousands of onlookers, crowded on both sides of the procession, this human wreck, with legs looking like sticks which were completely covered with sores, made five staggering steps on his dressing-gown, which had been thrown down as a rug, then fell back exhausted into arms stretched out to receive him.

"I followed his stretcher to the hospital, where he was carried, followed by crowds of people.

"He had not been able to speak for months except at rare intervals, and from his hips to his feet his body was absolutely rigid and insensible, even to red-hot irons, which doctors had sometimes tried as a remedy.

"This morning the wounds on his feet, which yesterday were suppurating, are almost entirely cured. There is a colour in his face, and he can speak distinctly.

"M. Gargam told us at the Medical Office where he was examined, that he had no faith prior to his cure."

there was a moment's silence between them—their thoughts lay too deep for words.

Could it be really true that the horrible nightmare which had lasted for more than twenty months was really over at last?

There are some very precious moments in our lives—so sweet that the heart is almost afraid to believe what the eyes can see, lest it be only a dream, to be followed by a dreadful awakening. It all seems too good to be true.

But this was no dream. Gabriel Gargam had really come back to life.

. . . . . .

He asked for food. It was twenty months since he had eaten anything solid. The œsophagian tube was at hand, but henceforth it was a useless instrument.

Gargam ate like any ordinary man, as if he had never been ill. They gave him soup, oysters, the wing of a chicken, a bunch of grapes. It was a perfect Gargantuan feast.

There was some hesitation about the chicken's wing. At first he was only allowed half. A whole wing! That was really too much for a first meal after so long a fast!

"But I insisted," says Gargam. "I felt I could eat the whole, and I ate it.

"My friends wondered what sort of a night I should have, especially as visitor after visitor poured in until a late hour, and I had to tell my story ten times over. Even nowadays I should be tired after such an evening."

But at last they left him in peace, and he went to sleep. Some friends slept near at hand in case

their services should be required. But Gargam slept as peacefully as a babe.

In the morning, when the sun's rays entered his room, Gargam felt inexpressibly happy. He was no longer nailed to his bed of suffering. He too was going to enjoy light and the agility of youth. He was going to live.

. . . . . .

When he returned to the Medical Office, he found the room packed with people impatiently waiting his arrival. All the doctors who were in Lourdes at the time had come to see a sight which they might never see again.

The family had telegraphed to Gargam's lawyer, M. Sevenet, who was staying at Saint Lausan. He came as speedily as possible, and arrived in time to accompany Gargam and his friends to the Office.

Gargam entered without support, and wearing a new suit bought only that morning. Every eye was turned full on him as if he were a ghost from another world.

His feet were examined. There was no more gangrene; the healed scar could be seen. The legs were in possession of their ordinary functions, but he was extremely thin and the muscles had gone.

"Gentlemen!" said Dr. Boissarie, addressing his colleagues, "we must first certify that from a medical point of view M. Gargam cannot walk, for he has no muscles."

And yet Gargam was told to walk, and he walked.

"Could M. Gargam stand up and walk?" an inquirer asked M—— V——.

GABRIEL GARCAM

"Not only could he stand up," was the reply, "but he walked alone, and without support."

"Without support? Why, the accounts in the newspapers said that M. Gargam took a friend's arm."

"Not at all; he walked alone, and without any support whatever—I saw him myself."

Then this long lean man—more like a skeleton than a man—told his story in detail.

. . . . . .

The discussion among the doctors was as to what was the precise lesion which had done so much harm? The head doctor at the Angoulême Hospital believed in a disease of the spinal cord; the second in charge, Dr. Tessier, inclined to believe in a compression of the cord by the vertebræ, the more so as the sick man complained of pain in the lumbar region. Several other theories were brought forward.

M. Sevenet then spoke. He had the whole case at his fingers' ends. He told the audience that the railway company had never doubted the gravity of the wounds inflicted, and that every doctor had found the infirmity incurable. The civil courts had described the injured man as a "veritable human wreck, whose intelligence alone had remained unimpaired."

Among the sixty doctors present, several gave their views on the profound evil, the origin and cause of the frightful disorders which had ruined this organism.

As usual, they disagreed. But one of the chief men among them, Dr. M——, a hospital surgeon in Paris, impatiently finished the discussion by saying: "What is the good, gentlemen, of seeking the seat

of the lesion? In such a state the lesion is everywhere, the whole organism is destroyed."

They all agreed to this, and decided that the disease had been incurable, and that Gargam would, from a pathological standpoint, have died in due course.

Strength rapidly returned. In three weeks Gargam had increased over 22 lbs. in weight, and gained about 5 inches in the girth of his legs—his calves were 14 inches round instead of 9 inches.

To-day he weighs 165 lbs., a normal weight for a man of his age and size. He can bear the fatigue of long hours of hard work at the piscinas, although, like many others cured at Lourdes, he bears a slight trace of his old infirmity as the guarantee of its erstwhile existence. He feels a certain weakness in his back at the spot where Dr. Tessier supposed that a vertebra was pressing on the medulla. Otherwise his health is perfect, and he has never had a relapse of any kind.[1]

. . . . . .

This case is a most difficult one for those who refuse to admit supernatural intervention.

The gravity of the disease has been officially attested. Not only had the doctors reported it to the civil authorities, but these latter in their turn

[1] If any one, infatuated with neuropathy, should be mad enough to suppose that M. Gargam's lamentable state was merely a nervous one, this trace of an ancient infirmity would be sufficient to prove him in the wrong. Had the disease been nervous and functional, and not organic, everything would have disappeared; all the functions being repaired, the disease would not have left any special trace.

Without presumption on our part, we can say that God's purpose is clearly seen here as in the cures of Mme. Rouchel and Clémentine Trouvé.

recognised it by awarding a large pension and indemnity to the injured man—"that human wreck," as they called him.

. . . . . .

What is the explanation? Will any one say that it was a question of emotion caused by confidence suddenly suppressing certain nervous accidents?

No one will believe them, except such as wish to safeguard their own biassed opinions. It is absurd to talk of nervousness in reference to a man who was never nervous, and whose family, especially his parents, were particularly calm and phlegmatic.

"My father," he said to me, "died at the age of eighty-nine. My mother is now sixty-three (1904), and enjoys good health. All my grandfathers and grandmothers reached a good old age."

Where is the religious exaltation, the self-suggestion that we hear spoken of so much? Since his youth Gargam had never practised his religion, and, on his bed of sickness, he had made no secret of his want of faith.

He went to Lourdes out of pure good-nature. On the morning of his arrival he refused to greet the crucifix on the mountain, which his mother pointed out to him.

He was touched by a religious emotion, but it was in the morning, before the Grotto, and he remained as ill as ever. Afterwards he was immersed in the piscina, but in vain.

He was cured just when he felt no sentiment or emotion of any kind—that is, just after one of his usual long fainting attacks, during which he had been taken for dead. It is immediately after-

wards that he raises himself on his hands and leaves his bed.

The sceptical onlooker whom we have already mentioned, was asked if he had spoken to Gargam at the Medical Office.

"Yes," he replied; "I spoke to him, and he answered perfectly."

"What did he tell you?"

"He said: 'I was a sceptic, and did not believe in miracles when I left Angoulême yesterday evening. This morning I believed no more than before.'"

Not only did he not believe, but he did not even have time to think about it at the moment when his cure took place. He was thinking of nothing when he regained consciousness.

There is no moral emotion sufficient to restore a decayed organism in the space of a minute, especially when, as in the present instance, the organism had been wasted and ravaged for twenty months by spinal disease.

We have seen how Bernheim repudiates the efficacy of suggestion in such grave cases. Finally, were a hypnotiser to take refuge in the fact of the hidden nature of the disease, there would always remain the gangrened extremities, which suddenly disappeared like the rest.

It is impossible to hide behind supposed mysteries; the sores were plainly visible, and the vertical piece of wood at the end of the stretcher was solely on their account. Sixty doctors saw the scars in progress of formation; all suppuration had ceased, and the tissue was being visibly restored.

"To believe in a miracle," M. Zola had said one

day to Dr. Boissarie, "show me a cut heal up under my eyes."

More than this had taken place under the eyes of several witnesses.

. . . . . .

It is easy to understand the extreme embarrassment of men prejudiced against Divine intervention.

I must quote M—— V—— once again. He declared that he had been much impressed by Gargam's cure, but, he added, "I do not believe in miracles."

"Well, how do you explain it all then?"

"I tell you I do not believe in miracles, yet *I cannot prove the contrary.*"

Which is the least one can say if one has reasons for remaining sceptical.

Unless one is absolutely prejudiced, it is impossible to deny that a higher power intervened here to give back life instantaneously to this already corrupting and miserable body.

When you see Gargam working happily among the sick at the piscinas, look at him well, for he is a living miracle.

. . . . . .

This is the last of the wonderful miracles we have to offer the reader. They have been chosen from among hundreds of others which have been the means of curing almost every kind of disease. The validity of these cures is not to be successfully denied. In them we have the proof of the sincerity of Bernadette, the reality of the apparitions, and the tender solicitude of Our Lady of Lourdes.

CONCLUSION

These are marvellous facts. They are established as firmly as any historical event. But they are not ordinary events, with a merely ephemeral interest, for the supernatural world, to which they belong, and whose existence they prove, is the true country whither our souls tend. It is not a matter of indifference, but one which we must decide either for or against.

Do you belong to the number of those who find in the events at Lourdes a providential manifestation designed to strike an incredulous and wandering generation who were becoming insensible to the action of God in the world? I earnestly hope that your views have been strengthened by the perusal of these pages.

But if, on the other hand, you belong to those troubled souls who are pursued by doubt, let me tell you that I have often thought of you without knowing you. I have tried to bring into your souls some rays of this glorious truth which, like the sun, illuminates, enkindles, and rejoices. And in so doing I have been moved by a kindly pity for your misfortune.

But I know full well that all my efforts will be in vain without two very necessary co-operators—yourselves and God.

For the light of the soul is essentially a matter

for conquest. We must acquire it by a true and loyal desire, by sincere seeking. But it is also a grace, and one of the most precious, which needs a heart exempt from vice, and must be asked for.

To speak as Christians—we must beg for help from heaven, we must pray God to enlighten us.

Do not say that this is prejudging His reply. It means that we must ask to know Him as He is, and to bring back our intellect into the right way if, unhappily, it has erred. After having done which—having read, pondered, prayed, and resolved to live a good life—you will find the way open to heavenly enlightenment.

And, believe me, you will be enlightened.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

I

A CALUMNY

Some time after the apparitions, two or three irreverent sceptics, being in a humorous mood, had the bad taste to publish the story in various *cafés* that the beautiful "Lady" who had appeared to Bernadette on February 11th was none other than Madame P——, who was well known at Lourdes.

Being in the Grotto at Massabieille with a young officer of the neighbouring garrison, and surprised by the child, Madame P—— had the sudden idea to act the part of an apparition, and to speak like a prophetess, in order to get herself out of the difficulty caused by an inconvenient witness whose indiscretion might seriously compromise her reputation.

Many people, not knowing the particulars and circumstances of the case, or Madame P——, believed this fairy tale. The newspapers got hold of it, and it was going the round when Zola went to Lourdes to find copy for his novel—in 1892. He was afterwards heard to repeat it in Parisian drawing-rooms, where the matter was being seriously discussed.

But discussion is superfluous, for Madame P—— has officially proved an *alibi*. The first apparition took place on Feb. 11, 1858. On this very day Madame P—— was ill in bed, so she could not have been wandering on the banks of the Gave. As a matter of fact she had, just three days previously, on February 8th, brought a little girl into the world. The certificate of birth is to be found in the civil registers at Lourdes (Number 13).

There is therefore no need to take the slightest notice of this ridiculous calumny, which is undeniably proved to be false. It only serves to show the bad faith of a certain number of those who have attacked the Lourdes apparitions.

II

BERNADETTE AND DOCTOR VOISIN

The *Union Médicale* of June 27, 1872, reproduced one of Dr. Voisin's lectures on mental diseases. In this lecture Dr. Voisin, of the Salpétrière, developed the theory that hallucinations always end in madness, and for proof he said: "The Lourdes miracle was affirmed on the faith of an hallucinated child who is shut up in the Ursuline Convent at Nevers."

As soon as this statement had been brought to the notice of the Bishop of Nevers, he wrote the following letter to the *Univers*:—

Dear Sir,—As you very well know, it was asserted some little time back by a professor at the Salpétrière, when developing his theories on hallucination, that Bernadette Soubirous, in religion Sister Marie-Bernard, was detained in the Ursuline Convent at Nevers as a mad woman. Will you kindly publish this letter, in which I declare:—

1. That Sister Marie-Bernard has never set foot in the Ursuline Convent at Nevers.

2. That she lives at Nevers, it is true, but in the mother-house of the Sisters of Charity and of Christian Instruction, where she entered and remains of her own free will like any other sister.

3. That, far from being mad, she is an uncommonly sensible person and of unequalled calmness of mind.

Moreover, I have great pleasure in inviting the above-mentioned professor to come in person to verify this triple statement.

If he will be good enough to let me know the date of his arrival, I will see to it that he is put in communication with Sister Marie-Bernard, and, that he may have no doubt as to her identity, I shall ask M. le Procureur of the Republic to present her. He will then be able to regard her and to question her as long as it pleases him.

Personally, I promise every hospitality.

✠ Augustine, Bishop of Nevers.

Oct. 3, 1872.

A Catholic champion, M. G. Artus, offered a thousand francs to Dr. Voisin should he prove his case. But Dr. Voisin kept silence, having no reply to make. After having several times and publicly given him the opportunity of justifying his assertion, M. Artus wrote as follows:—

"Allow me, Sir, to end this discussion by a reflection which is addressed to all those who, like yourself, have the honour to speak to the public either by speech or in writing. In these conditions, any man who denies or asserts facts of such importance without due consideration, or accurate verification, commits a social crime, for he falsifies or troubles the consciences of an innumerable class who have neither time nor opportunity to examine the matter for themselves, and who naturally tend to believe those whose duty it is to instruct them."

Two or three months after the publication of Dr. Voisin's lecture, Dr. Damoiseau, President of the Orne Medical Society, wrote to Dr. Robert Saint-Cyr, President of the Nièvre Medical Society, to beg him to give him positive information with regard to Bernadette's mental condition. He received the following reply:—

NEVERS, *September* 3, 1872.

MY DEAR COLLEAGUE,—You could not have applied to a better source for information about the young girl of Lourdes, to-day Sister Marie-Bernard. As doctor to the community, I have long given my care to this young sister, whose delicate health at one time gave us cause for uneasiness. She is now much better, and from patient has become my infirmarian, and accomplishes her duties perfectly.

Slight and frail in appearance, she is twenty-seven years old. Naturally calm and gentle, she tends the invalids very intelligently, and without omitting any of the directions given. She has complete control of her patients, and I have entire confidence in her.

You see, my dear colleague, that this young sister is far from being insane. I would say further, that her calm, simple, and sweet nature is not in the least compatible with any such tendency.

It gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity of giving you the information you desire.

(Signed) Robert Saint-Cyr,
President of the Nièvre Medical Society.

This letter is decisive.

III

DOCTORS AT LOURDES

Since 1890 until September 1, 1904, the number of doctors visiting the Medical Office at Lourdes are as follows:—

1890	27	1897	211
1891	36	1898	200
1892	120	1899	240
1893	109	1900	216
1894	169	1901	328
1895	177	1902	268
1896	202	1903	228
1904	181 (until September 1, 1904)		

—making a total of 2712 for fourteen years. Of these 2712 doctors, 461 were foreigners, and it may also be remarked that there were:—

3 members of the Paris Academy of Medicine.
1 member of the Brussels Academy of Medicine.
1 physician to the King of Sweden.
26 professors of French faculties.
14 professors of foreign faculties.
8 professors of medical schools.
48 hospital doctors and surgeons.
74 house surgeons.

IV

STATISTICS OF CURES (Whole or Partial) according to the nature of the diseases

1. *Diseases of the Digestive Organs*

Dysphagia	3	Intestinal perforation	2
Pharyngitis	1	Hernia	32
Œsophagitis	3	Peritonitis	26
Gastritis	97	Meteorism	4
Gastralgia	54	Ascites	15
Circular ulcer of stomach	82	Abscess in the stomach	4
Dyspepsia	60	Cirrhosis	2
Stomach cancer	6	Abscess in the liver	1
Dilatation of the stomach	7	Cysts in the liver	2
Incontrollable vomiting	13	Diseases of the liver	19
Enteritis	59	Cancer in the liver	1
Appendicitis	3		

2. *Diseases of the Circulatory Apparatus*

Aortic regurgitancy	6	Phlebitis	18
Arterio-sclerosis	3	Syncope	1
Heart disease	51	Cancer of the heart	1
Varices	7		

3. *Lung Diseases*

Bronchitis	80	Pleurisy	10
Pulmonary emphysema	2	Asthma	9
Pulmonary congestion	7	Pulmonary lesions	6
Pneumonia	11	Laryngitis	21

4. *Diseases of the Urinary Apparatus*

Acute nephritis	15	Hydronephrosis	1
Bright's disease	3	Uremia and hematuria	3
Floating kidney	1	Albuminuria	6
Renal calculus	5	Anuria	1
Incontinency of urine	1	Cystitis	11

5. *Diseases of the Spinal Cord*

Little's disease	2	Acute myelitis	103
Tabes dorsalis	21	Insular sclerosis	2

6. *Brain Diseases*

Aphasia	69	Neuritis	5
Cerebral congestion	7	Cerebral hemorrhage	3
Deaf-mutism	23	Alalia	8
Acute meningitis	11	Paralysis	244
Pachymeningitis	1	Paraplegia	48
Hemicrania	1	Paresis	36
Cephalalgia	8		

7. *Bone Affections*

Cyphosis	1	Osteitis	38
Scoliosis	3	Necrosis	2
Lateral curvature	24	Pseudarthrosis	1
Caries of the spinal cord	2	Fracture (or results of fracture)	11
Caries ossium	30		

8. *Joint Diseases*

Synovitis	5	Arthritis	136
Sprain	12	Hydarthrosis	4
Genu valgum	4	Loosening of the pelvic joints	1
Club-foot	6		

9. *Diseases of the Eyes*

Conjunctivitis	11	Various diseases	59
Keratitis	7	Blepharitis	2
Papillary atrophy	9	Detachment of the retina	2
Blindness	48		

10. *Diseases of the Ears*

Otitis	5	Deafness	28
Otorrhea	2		

11. *Skin Diseases*

Eczema	17	Herpetic purpura	2
Pemphigus	2	Ecthyma	1
Eruptions	7	Icthyosis and leprosy	3
Burn	1	Elephantiasis	3

12. *Diseases of the Uterus and Appendages*

Fibroma	10	Metrorrhagia	4
Salpyngitis	6	Prolapsus uteri	5
Ovarian cysts	4	Carcinoma	2
Metritis	17	Mammitis	3
Ovaritis	9	Amenorrhea	1

13. *Tuberculosis*

Pulmonary tuberculosis	301	Hip disease	145
Intestinal tuberculosis	33	Lupus	15
White swelling	44		

14. *Acute Diseases*

Cholera	1	Croup	2
Diphtheria	2	Tetanus	1

15. *Tumours*

Peripheral tumours	60	Cancer of the bone	2
Hip tumours	8	Abdominal tumour	32

16. *Nervous Diseases*

Neuralgia	61	Exophthalmic goitre	5
Sciatica	19	Neurasthenia	78
Epilepsy	14	Hallucination	2
Hysteria	53	Obsession	2
St. Vitus' dance	15	Catalepsy	6

17. *General and Sundry Diseases*

Rheumatism	133	Anemia	20
Cachexia	14	Sores	44
Adder bite	1	Syphilis	1
Gangrene of the extremities	1	Fever	14
Rickets	10	Abdominal troubles	16
Various diseases	32	Influenza	1
Lameness	18	Wry-neck	3
General debility	14	Contractions	20
Phlegmons	4	Muscular atrophy	12
Multiple sclerosis	1	Anchylosis	11
Colliquative sweats	1	Œdema	4
Morphinomania	1	Dumbness	8
Cancers	17		

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